

University of Strathclyde
Department of Human Resource Management

**A constraint-friendly approach to
understanding contemporary graduate
careers**

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the degree of doctor of philosophy**

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I almost wish I hadn't gone down that rabbit-hole,

and yet, and yet –

it's rather curious, you know, this sort of life.

Lewis Carroll

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ABSTRACT

In today's so-called knowledge economy, skills policies in the UK and the 'new' career discourse assume opportunities in the labour market to be virtually limitless and emphasise the role of self-directedness for enhancing and maintaining employability, securing employment and developing careers. Increasing, and to some extent persistent, accounts of graduate underemployment contradict these assumptions. This study aims to contribute to our understanding of contemporary graduate careers by examining (i) the factors associated with enhancing graduate employability and the extent to which this reflects a self-directed process; and (ii) the occupational boundaries within which graduate careers develop and the extent to which this reflects limitlessness of opportunities for graduates' career development; and (iii) by exploring career mobility and outcomes for graduates, starting with entry into and movement out of early underemployment and extending up to ten years, to determine the role of employability on early graduate underemployment, its pervasiveness and temporality and the emerging career patterns in the graduate labour market.

The study uses a mixed methods approach consisting of primary and secondary survey data analyses to study graduate employability and the structure of opportunities; and career history analyses from 37 in-depth interviews with

graduates mostly from arts, social sciences and humanities, and business-related courses to explore graduate career mobility.

The findings suggest that contemporary graduate careers are increasingly *bounded* by the opportunities in the graduate labour market and that graduate adaptability is the key to developing employability perceptions, successful job transitions and, career satisfaction and well-being. These results point to segmentation within the graduate labour market which comprises 'lousy', intermediate and 'lovely' jobs, and a struggle on the graduates' side in forming employability for 'graduate' level employment. From a theoretical perspective, this study provides a bridge from the 'new' career discourse to the structure of opportunities by examining career development and outcomes for highly skilled workers who are taken for granted to be the pillars of 'boundarylessness'. From a policy perspective, it highlights a need for intervention on the demand side in achieving the 'high skills, high wages' vision.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY AND AUTHOR'S RIGHTS.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT.....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	ix
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES	xiii
Figures	xiii
Tables	xv
1. INTRODUCTION	1
The rationale for research on contemporary graduate careers.....	2
The scope of research on contemporary graduate careers.....	5
Graduate employability	6
Occupational boundaries of the graduate labour market.....	9
Graduate career mobility.....	10
Research framework and strategy	12
The outline of the thesis	13
2. GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY	16
Introduction	16
Definitional issues on employability.....	19
Career self-management.....	24
Graduate employability	28
Who gets the better jobs?	33
Are some graduates 'more equal' than others?.....	35
The unobserved heterogeneity thesis	35
The positional conflict view.....	37
Chapter conclusions.....	39
3. OCCUPATIONAL BOUNDARIES OF THE GRADUATE LABOUR MARKET	42
Introduction	42
Job quality in the UK.....	45
Job quality in the UK graduate labour market.....	49
'New' graduate occupations	50
'Rebadged' intermediate occupations	53

Chapter conclusions	60
4. GRADUATE CAREER MOBILITY	63
Introduction	63
Career mobility from a 'new' career perspective	65
Career mobility from a constraint-friendly perspective.....	69
University-to-work transitions.....	74
Career mobility following early underemployment	80
Chapter conclusions	89
5. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK	93
Introduction	93
Determinants of graduate employability.....	95
Determinants of career self-management.....	95
The role of CSM on perceived employability.....	102
The occupational boundaries of the graduate labour market	105
Graduate career mobility.....	110
Entry into underemployment.....	111
Movement out of underemployment	115
Career mobility and outcomes following early underemployment	120
Chapter conclusions	123
6. RESEARCH STRATEGY	127
Introduction	127
Phase I: Examining determinants of perceived employability via survey of 2009/2010 graduates	131
Survey development	131
Sampling strategy.....	132
Sample description	135
Survey measures.....	139
Phase II: Examining the occupational boundaries of the graduate labour market via secondary data analysis.....	148
Sample description	149
Measures.....	152
Phase III: Exploring career mobility for graduates via semi-structured interviews.....	164
Development of interview schedule and selection of participants	165
Participant description	167
The interview schedule.....	168

Analytical strategy	172
Phase I: Graduate employability	172
Phase II: Occupational boundaries of the graduate labour market.....	173
Phase III: Graduate career mobility	174
Chapter conclusions	177
7. FINDINGS I: GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY	181
Introduction	181
Determinants of career self-management and perceived employability	182
Chapter conclusions	195
8. FINDINGS II: OCCUPATIONAL BOUNDARIES OF THE GRADUATE LABOUR MARKET	199
Introduction	199
Job quality in ‘emerging’ graduate occupations.....	201
Job complexity.....	201
Graduateness skills.....	208
Intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of work in ‘emerging’ occupations	216
Employment-related outcomes in ‘emerging’ occupations.....	228
Chapter conclusions	241
9. FINDINGS III: GRADUATE CAREER MOBILITY	243
Introduction	243
Entry into underemployment.....	247
Transition out of underemployment.....	265
Spill-over effects of early underemployment on career mobility and outcomes	281
Job transitions following early underemployment	281
Well-being and career satisfaction following early underemployment.....	288
Chapter conclusions	294
10. DISCUSSION.....	299
Theoretical implications	306
Occupational boundaries of the graduate labour market	306
Graduate employability	311
Career mobility and outcomes	336
Implications for policy and practice.....	342
Contributions.....	350
Chapter conclusions	354

11. CONCLUSION	358
Understanding contemporary graduate careers	358
Limitations and future research	360
Conclusion	363
REFERENCES	365
APPENDICES	399
Appendix I: Survey of 2009/2010 graduates	399
Appendix II: Binary logistic comparison of graduate characteristics across cohorts	412
Appendix III: Distribution of occupations in the SS06 (N=488), %	413
Appendix IV: Interview schedule	414
Appendix V: Career progression for 'stuck', 'wrong-foot'- 'right-track' and 'right-foot'- 'right-track' interview participants	416

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figures

Figure 3.1	Distribution of Employment in the UK, 2009 (%).....	48
Figure 3.2	Distribution of skill levels across SOC(HE) occupations.....	51
Figure 4.1	Forrier et al.'s (2009) conceptual model of career mobility.....	71
Figure 4.2	Conceptual model of university-to-work transitions that result in underemployment.....	80
Figure 4.3	Conceptual model of graduates' movement out of underemployment.....	89
Figure 5.1	Hypothesised research model testing the self-directedness of employability upon graduation.....	105
Figure 5.2	Research framework for exploring graduates' entry into underemployment upon graduation.....	115
Figure 5.3	Research framework for exploring graduates' movement out of underemployment.....	123
Figure 5.4	Summary of the proposed research framework to study contemporary graduate careers.....	126
Figure 6.1	Summary of the research strategy.....	130
Figure 6.2	Analytical strategy used in exploring graduate career mobility...	177
Figure 7.1	Findings from online survey and interview data on the self-directedness of employability upon graduation.....	198
Figure 8.1	Differences in graduateness skills between non-graduate and associate professional occupations (evidence from Participant 30).....	216
Figure 8.2	Changes in task discretion between low, intermediate and high skilled occupations (evidence from Participant 28).....	224
Figure 9.1	Propositions tested in exploring graduate career mobility.....	245
Figure 9.2	Analytical strategy for exploring graduate career mobility.....	247

Figure 9.3	Summary of participants' early career indecision and discouragement from the GLM (N=36)	262
Figure 9.4	Summary of findings from graduate career history analysis in entry into and movement out of underemployment, and the spill-over effects on career progression and outcomes	298
Figure 10.1	Summary of research findings.....	305

Tables

Table 5.1	List of hypotheses and propositions corresponding to the research objectives	124
Table 6.1	Sample descriptions for the 2009, 2010 cohorts and overall sample	138
Table 6.2	Means, standard deviations and bivariate correlations for online survey measures (N=433)	146
Table 6.3	Description of sample characteristics across SOC2000 occupations (N=488)	151
Table 6.4	Bivariate correlations for variables from SS06 (N=488)	161
Table 6.5	Description of participant characteristics (N=37)	170
Table 6.6	List of propositions and hypotheses and source of analysis	179
Table 7.1	List of hypotheses tested in relation to graduate employability... ..	182
Table 7.2	Hierarchical regression analyses testing the determinants of CSM (N=433)	185
Table 7.3	Hierarchical regression analyses testing the influence of CSM on perceived employability (N=433)	187
Table 7.4	Multiple mediation analyses testing the indirect effects of job and career preferences, self-esteem, and social and educational background on perceived employability via CSM (N=433)	189
Table 8.1	List of hypotheses tested in relation to occupational boundaries of the GLM	200
Table 8.2	Binary logistic and multiple regression analyses comparing job complexity across graduate occupations (N=488)	207
Table 8.3	Means and standard deviations for study measures across SOC2000 occupation (N=488)	213
Table 8.4	Hierarchical regression analyses comparing associate professional occupations to managerial, professional, administrative/secretarial and other low skilled occupations on gradueness skills (N=488)	214

Table 8.5	Hierarchical regression analyses comparing aspects of job quality across graduate occupations (N=488).....	226
Table 8.6	Hierarchical regression analyses comparing associate professional occupations to managerial, professional, administrative/secretarial and other low skilled occupations on employment-related outcomes (N=488).....	236
Table 8.7	Hierarchical regression analyses testing the mediating role of job quality on the relationship between occupation and employment-related outcomes (N=488)	238
Table 8.8	Hierarchical regression analyses testing the relative contribution of aspects of job quality to employment-related outcomes (N=488)	239
Table 9.1	Description of 'right-foot' and 'wrong-foot' graduates (N=37)	263

Chapter One

1. INTRODUCTION

The second half of the 20th century has witnessed important technological, economic and political developments that changed how work is organised and effected how careers are developed. In today's 'knowledge economy' there is now greater emphasis on knowledge and skills in achieving and maintaining international competitiveness. This is reflected in developed, as well as developing, countries' adoption of the vision of a 'high skills, high wages' economy and increased investments in Higher Education (HE) (Brown, Ashton, Lauder, & Tholen, 2008; European Council, 2000; Leitch Review of Skills, 2006). The proliferation in reports of early, and to some extent persistent, graduate underemployment witnessed in the last two decades, however, suggests that the 'best laid plans of mice and men' may have gone 'awry' in the intended outcomes of this 'high skills, high wages' vision. Underemployment refers to "an inferior, lesser, or lower quality type of employment" (Feldman, 1996, p. 387). In the case of graduate underemployment, this is reflected in graduates' employment in traditionally non-graduate occupations and, therefore, describes

a mismatch between education and employment¹. This also contradicts the 'new' career discourse, which advocates the boundarylessness of opportunities in the knowledge economy (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) and, alongside skills policies, emphasises self-directedness in enhancing employability, securing employment and developing careers. Defining 'career' as "the sequence of employment-related positions, roles, activities and experiences encountered by a person" (Arnold, 1997a, p. 16), the overarching aim of this research is to contribute to our understanding of contemporary graduate careers by examining (i) the nature and self-directedness of graduate employability; and (ii) the boundaries of the graduate labour market (GLM) within which graduate careers are realised; and, by exploring (iii) career mobility for graduates, reflected in entry into and movement out of early underemployment and the effects of this experience on later career mobility and outcomes.

The rationale for research on contemporary graduate careers

Traditionally graduate careers developed in large graduate employers, which offered clear onward and upward development and progression opportunities. With increasing graduate supply and changes to work organisation in the recent decades, the proportionate availability of these have been in decline. Concurrently, the 'new' career literature, celebrates the demise of the organisational career and the rise of boundarylessness in opportunities for career development via individual responsibility and proactivity (e.g., Briscoe & Hall, 2006). Based on a knowledge economy thesis, which predicts an

¹ This is synonymous with the concept of overqualification and these terms will be used interchangeably throughout this thesis.

'upskilling' of jobs due to advancements in information and communication technologies (ICTs), careers today are argued to comprise of frequent job changes and, therefore, to be boundaryless (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). Graduates, within this 'new' career discourse, are assumed to constitute today's knowledge workers, i.e., those who create market niches for themselves and transcend organisational/occupational boundaries to increase their employability and, in turn, success in the labour market (Tam, Korczynski, & Frenkel, 2002). Nevertheless, there is now a plethora of evidence to suggest that, at least at the start, not all graduates can be categorised as knowledge workers or their work as high-skilled knowledge work.

In understanding contemporary graduate careers, the focus of this research is on the UK context, where supply side skills policies received much attention in creating a 'high skills, high wages' economy and a rising liberalisation on the demand side, which resulted in increasing labour market flexibility and diversity in employment practices, was observed in the last few decades (P. Smith & Morton, 2006). With regards to graduate employment, this was largely based on the assumption that all HE degrees across all institutions result in a similar level of 'graduateness' for all who participate (Warhurst & Thompson, 2006) and that employers would be able to efficiently utilise and develop this increasing skills stock (Keep & Mayhew, 2004). Nevertheless, an increasing diversity in graduate employment patterns has been reported, with a vast majority of university leavers starting in traditionally non-graduate (low and intermediate skilled) occupations. Increasing graduate density, especially in the

latter, has been taken for granted to reflect employment commensurate with their knowledge, skills and abilities (e.g., Elias & Purcell, 2004b). Within this context, graduate underemployment in the UK has been largely treated as a temporary phenomenon (Purcell & Elias, 2004) and received scarce attention in understanding contemporary graduate careers.

Research at the low-skilled 'lousy' end of the labour market (Goos & Manning, 2003a) suggests that career mobility for these workers while resembling that of boundarylessness due to frequent job/organisation changes (Toynbee, 2003), is in no way comparable to the boundaryless mindset proposed by the proponents of the 'new' career discourse (Inkson, Roper, & Ganesh, 2008). We know, however, very little as to career mobility and outcomes for the highly skilled workers who start on the wrong end of the labour market, i.e., in underemployment. Moreover, skills policies in the UK and the 'new' career theorising, by overemphasising the role of individual responsibility in securing employment and developing careers, appear unwilling and/or unable to intervene at the demand side and run the risk of inadvertently blaming the victim. Based on this theoretical and practical rationale and a recent call for studies examining graduate underemployment from a broader perspective (Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2011), this research systematically examines self-directedness of graduate employability and the assumption of limitlessness of opportunities in the GLM, and explores career mobility for graduates who start careers in underemployment to understand the role of employability in securing employment and developing careers, the temporality of

underemployment for graduates and the new career patterns that emerge in the GLM. This approach to graduate careers is in line with a need for understanding how workers (Weiss & Rupp, 2011) and, in particular, graduates experience work (Tomlinson, 2007). It also responds to a recent call for studying new career patterns (Baruch & Bozionelos, 2010; Inkson, Gunz, Ganesh, & Roper, 2012) by building on the assumptions and predictions of the 'new' career, yet offering a constraint-friendly approach to understanding contemporary graduate careers.

The scope of research on contemporary graduate careers

This research studies early graduate underemployment and its career-related consequences in later career from a career mobility framework. Career mobility refers to a change in employment status (Feldman & Ng, 2007) and/or work transitions (Forrier, Sels, & Stynen, 2009). Starting with school-to-work transition and ending with transition to retirement, we experience multiple occurrences of mobility throughout careers (Feldman, 1988) which are embedded in other strands of our lives, e.g., personal, family and community (Lee, Kossek, Hall, & Litrico, 2011).

Traditionally, two competing approaches have been taken to the study of career mobility. On the one hand, sociologists and labour economists have long argued that mobility is largely vacancy-driven (e.g., DiPrete & Nonnemaker, 1997; Fujiwara-Greve & Greve, 2000; Haveman & Cohen, 1994). On the other hand, the 'new' career and vocational psychology research treat mobility as self-directed and based on individual agency and responsibility (e.g., Hall, 1996;

2004). Both perspectives have found some support in their respective fields. In offering a constraint-friendly approach to understanding contemporary graduate careers, this research adapts Forrier et al.'s (2009) conceptual framework on career mobility which provides a parsimonious bridge from the latter to the former and proposes that career mobility is largely bounded by how an *individual* negotiates the structural *boundaries* of the labour market (Inkson & King, 2011; King, Burke, & Pemberton, 2005). Based on this proposition, a better understanding of contemporary graduate careers requires three phases of conceptual examination comprising of (1) the individual (i.e., employability) and (2) the structural (i.e., occupational boundaries of the graduate labour market (GLM)) components, before examining (3) graduate career mobility.

Graduate employability

Skills policies in the UK create a meritocratic labour market in appearance where employment outcomes are argued to be tied to proactively engaging in employability enhancing activities, i.e., career self-management. Consistent with Human Capital Theory (HCT; Becker, 1964), the 'high skills, high wages' vision of the British policy makers suggests that human capital (skills, qualifications and knowledge an individual accumulates over the years through formal education and/or training) is the most important asset in today's economy (DfES, 2003a, 2003b, 2006). Similarly, the 'new' career discourse places great importance on self-directedness in shaping careers (Arthur, Inkson, & Pringle, 1999; Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005). An examination of who gets the

'good' jobs in the UK, however, suggests that amongst other demographics, social and educational background strongly determine graduate destinations, at least upon graduation. This gives this research the rationale to question the extent to which development of employability is self-directed. From a labour economics perspective, these systematic differences, particularly those in relation to educational history, reflect the unobserved ability differences amongst graduates: graduates with lower knowledge, skills and abilities find work in the lower end of the GLM (e.g., Chevalier & Lindley, 2006; Ireland, Naylor, Smith, & Telhaj, 2009; O'Leary & Sloane, 2005). From a sociological point of view, on the other hand, these differences reflect a positional conflict brought about in the GLM with HE expansion. This is argued to have resulted in credential inflation, where the value of a university degree decreases as the supply of graduates increase. Within this context, it is argued, it is the more advantaged (i.e., those from more advantaged social backgrounds and/or who achieved more prestigious degree outcomes) who secure the 'good' jobs and this creates a zero-sum game in the GLM (e.g., Brown, 2000, 2003; Brown, Hesketh, & Williams, 2003). Both the unobserved heterogeneity and the positional conflict views on graduate employability have largely found support in their respective disciplines.

The unequivocal effect of social and educational background on graduate employment outcomes, at least upon graduation, suggests that if, as advocated by the UK skills policy and the 'new' career discourse, employability is the key for success in employment and career outcomes then social and educational

background may limit the extent to which graduates are willing/able to enhance employability for high-skilled work. Recent research suggests that graduate employability, rather than being viewed as a possession or position, needs to be examined from a process view (Holmes, 2011), developed as result of engaging in career self-management (CSM) (Bridgstock, 2009). Based on this, a need to consider not only motivational factors but also opportunities/barriers in enhancing and maintaining employability was identified. This questions the extent to which enhancing and maintaining employability is self-directed. Hence, the first objective of this research is to examine the factors associated with enhancing graduate employability and the extent to which this reflects a self-directed process.

With an attempt to reconcile the role of boundaries in employability development, the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, while placing the ultimate responsibility on students and graduates, *rather conveniently* encourages partnerships between universities and employers (BIS, 2012; CBI, 2009). Nevertheless, the power of balance still rests with the latter due to lack of intervention yet growing liberalisation at the demand side (Boden & Nedeva, 2010). With an ever changing definition of employability on the demand side and questionable graduatisation of vacancies for graduates, this runs the danger of degradation and marketisation of HE in the UK. Theoretically, an understanding of the self-directedness of employability is expected to contribute to the call for a more boundary oriented approach in career studies

(Inkson et al., 2012), as well as complementing the findings from the unobserved heterogeneity and positional conflict perspectives.

Occupational boundaries of the graduate labour market

Graduate underemployment is increasingly being treated as a temporary phenomenon in graduate careers as the great majority of those who start in low skilled work move out within three to five years after graduation (Purcell and Elias, 2004). With evidence showing slower than expected growth at the high skilled, 'lovely', end of the labour market (Beaven, Bosworth, Lewney, & Wilson, 2005) and shortage of intermediately skilled workers yet an increasing demand, especially at the associate professional occupations (Anderson, 2009), employment in intermediate skilled occupations is becoming ever more common in graduate careers. Yet, there has been little evidence of upgrading on the part of the employers to accommodate graduate knowledge, skills and abilities (Mason, 2002). Hence, in understanding contemporary graduate careers, this research examines the occupational boundaries of the GLM in the UK and the evidence on availability and quality of graduate occupations. This identifies a need to place graduate employment within the broader labour market debates concerning 'upskilling' and job polarisation, and to closely examine the case of 'emerging' intermediate skilled graduate occupations that are now absorbing an increasing density of graduates. Based on this, a second objective of this research is to examine the occupational boundaries within which graduate careers develop.

Theoretically, this contributes to the 'upskilling' debate associated with knowledge economy discourse and demonstrates, not only the boundaries of the GLM for graduate career development but also the pervasiveness of underemployment in the GLM. This also provides an indirect indication as to the temporality of graduate underemployment, as most who move out of low skilled work have been shown to move on to these 'emerging' occupations (Purcell & Elias, 2004). From a policy perspective, this informs us of the validity of the efficient skills utilisation assumption and points to areas of development in job redesign/creation needed in the graduatisation of these 'emerging' occupations to match the quality offered by traditional graduate occupations.

Graduate career mobility

Having considered the individual and structural components of career mobility, the third and final area of conceptual examination was graduate career mobility. In contrast to the 'new' career discourse, which treats mobility as synonymous with career success, the conceptual model adapted from Forrier et al., (2009) in this study suggests that not all transitions are successful for the individual, depending, for instance, on the opportunities for enhancing and maintaining employability. Based on this model and the analysis of the diversity in individual and structural components career mobility in the GLM, a third objective of this research is to explore graduates' entry into and movement out of early underemployment and the spill-over effects of this experience in later career mobility and outcomes. This highlights a need for an in-depth

examination of the dynamics at work in graduate underemployment in access to the first job and later jobs as experienced by the individual.

Skills policies in the UK foresee the outcomes of investment in HE as ‘far-reaching’ (DfES, 2003a) for all parties involved, i.e., students, universities, employers and national economic competitiveness. Particularly by exploring its spill-over effects this research is expected to contribute to our understanding of the pervasiveness and temporality of underemployment and the emerging career patterns in the GLM. Theoretically, it is expected to contribute to the ‘new’ career discourse by highlighting not only the role of employability but that of social, educational and occupational boundaries in career mobility and success for a group of workers who are largely assumed to occupy the ‘lovely’ end of the labour market and to be the perfect prototypes for the boundarylessness argument.

In summary, with the overarching aim of contributing to our understanding of contemporary graduate careers, three main objectives of this research are (1) to examine the factors associated with enhancing graduate employability and the extent to which this reflects a self-directed process; (2) to examine the occupational boundaries within which graduate careers develop; and (3) to explore graduates’ entry into and movement out of early underemployment and the effects of this experience on later career mobility and outcomes. In doing so, this research poses one overarching research question that aids our understanding contemporary graduate careers: ‘what is the role of self-

directedness in graduate employability, underemployment and career development?’

Research framework and strategy

Research strategy followed closely the three conceptual phases of analysis on understanding contemporary graduate careers. Based on the gaps identified in this conceptual analysis, hypotheses and propositions were developed concerning the nature and development of graduate employability; the occupational boundaries of the GLM; and graduate career mobility and outcomes in the first 10 years. A mixed methods design was applied. The first analytical phase (Phase I) consisted of an online survey examining the determinants of employability, which was administered to two successive graduating cohorts in the UK (survey of 2009/2010 graduates). In Phase II, the boundaries of the GLM were examined through a systematic analysis of job quality and employment-related outcomes for ‘emerging’ graduate occupations in comparison to non- and traditional graduate occupations, using a nationally representative secondary survey data (2006 Skills Survey) of graduates with three to ten years of work experience. Phase III involved career history analysis of 37 graduates in the UK and explored career mobility and outcomes in the first 10 years of graduate careers via semi-structured in-depth interviews. Interviews were also used to triangulate findings from the primary and secondary surveys, in examining graduate employability and the boundaries of the GLM.

The outline of the thesis

With the overarching objective of understanding contemporary graduate careers, the thesis first reviews the literature corresponding to the three conceptual phases: Chapter Two examines the nature of employability as it is discussed in the 'new' career literature and focuses on the determinants of graduate employability; Chapter Three places graduate employment within the broader debates on job quality in the UK and examines the evidence on availability and quality of today's graduate occupations; Chapter Four then reviews the literature on career mobility and outcomes in general and specifically for graduates. Based on the gaps identified in the conceptual analyses, Chapter Five develops hypotheses and propositions in understanding contemporary graduate careers; Chapter Six operationalises these via use of primary and secondary survey data and career history data from interviews. Following this, three findings chapters are presented, corresponding to the three conceptual and analytical phases. Chapter Seven reports findings in relation to employability development upon graduation from university. Chapter Eight reports findings on job quality and employment-related outcomes in 'emerging' occupations by contrasting these to non- and traditional-graduate occupations to determine the occupational boundaries of the GLM. Chapter Nine then reports career history analyses from three transitional stages. The first transitional stage concerns university-to-work transitions that result in underemployment and provides a comparison of graduates who started their careers in underemployment ('wrong-foot') to

those who did not ('right-foot'). Graduates' movement out of early underemployment in low skilled work constitutes the second transitional stage explored in this research and early career history of graduates who moved out of early underemployment ('wrong-foot' – 'right-track') is compared to those who could not ('wrong-foot' – 'stuck'). The final transitional stage explored is the job transitions following early underemployment in the first 10 years of employment. Here the overall quality of job transitions experienced by graduates who started their careers in underemployment and could not move out ('wrong-foot' – 'stuck') and those who moved out ('wrong-foot' – 'right-track') are compared against those who started on the right-foot and progressed ('right-foot' – 'right-track').

Chapter Ten discusses implications of the empirical findings for theory, practice and policymaking in relation to the overall objective of understanding contemporary graduate careers. It is argued here that (i) a segmentation (into 'traditional' high skilled, 'emerging' intermediate skilled and 'non-graduate' low skilled occupations) is observed in the GLM based on the intrinsic features of work that lead to development through work; (ii) graduate employability may not be as self-directed as argued to be, and that social, educational and labour market related constraints indirectly determine the extent to which graduates engage in CSM and enhance employability; (iii) employability for graduates represents formation of career goals and adaptation to the segmentation of opportunities in the GLM; (iv) while graduate employability appears to be the key in securing favourable employment outcomes, this is very much realised

within the boundaries of the three segments of the GLM, and hence, graduate underemployment may not be as temporary as argued to be due to entrapment in low/intermediate segments which is observed in graduates' career patterns.

Chapter Eleven concludes by discussing the limitations of this research in satisfying the research objectives, identifying areas of future research that need more scholarly attention and clarifying the study's original contribution to understanding graduate careers.

Chapter Two

2. GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

Introduction

The high skills, high wages vision in the UK was translated into a rapid expansion of Higher Education (HE). This is evidenced in the successive skills policies which enabled the ‘massification’ of the formerly ‘elite’ HE system (e.g., Further and Higher Education Act 1992; Further and Higher Education Act 2004). Participation rates increased from 15 to close to 50 per cent in the last three decades (BIS, 2011) and a proportionate increase in the university educated workforce was observed (Oesch & Rodriguez Menes, 2010). Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2006) stated that one primary aim of this widening participation was to “narrow social class gaps in education achievement, to create a society with equality of economic and social opportunity” (p. 4). Hence, it is assumed that widening opportunities in HE will translate into those in labour market outcomes. Based on this, the current UK skills policy discourse on employability stresses the importance of the individual and her capabilities in securing employment. This is clearly reflected in the former Minister of Higher Education, David Lammy’s statement that: “Today’s labour market is bringing home to students the need to take *personal responsibility* for developing the skills and attributes that will help make them

employable and their employers competitive” (CBI, 2009, p. 1, italics added). Similarly, the ‘new’ career concepts such as the boundaryless (Arthur et al., 2005; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) and the protean career (Hall, 2004) celebrate the limitless opportunities in the labour market, navigated via self-directedness and career self-management. Hence, there is now growing importance attached to the role of individual responsibility and proactivity in employment and career outcomes. Based on this increasing emphasis by skills policies and the ‘new’ career discourse, understanding the factors associated with enhancing graduate employability and the extent to which this reflects a self-directed process is the first objective in satisfying this research’s overarching aim of understanding contemporary graduate careers.

From the 1980s, a number of initiatives in the UK aimed at widening participation in HE were evident. The previous Prime Minister Gordon Brown (2008) made this ambition clear in stating that:

Once, we worried about a global arms race. The challenge this century is a global skills race and that is why we need to push ahead faster with our reforms to extend education opportunities for all.

The HE expansion was mainly achieved by reforms of the school leaving examination system (GCSEs); removal of student number quotas; reduction of the unit cost of a student; and abolishment of Polytechnics and creation of new (post-1992) universities. While this aimed to provide opportunities for all, it also created stratification within the HE system, where old universities and

professional degree courses are perceived to be more prestigious (Reay, David, & Ball, 2001). Within this system, new universities typically require lower entry requirements, have higher staff/student ratios and lower research assessment exercise scores in comparison to old universities (Chevalier & Conlon, 2003). Moreover, these new universities offer new degree courses (e.g., sports science) that are tailored for narrowly defined markets to attract students. The former HE Minister Margaret Hodge rather unfortunately referred to these as the 'Mickey Mouse' degree courses, where "the content is perhaps not as rigorous as one would expect and where the degree itself may not have huge relevance in the labour market" (BBC, 2003). Nevertheless, skills policies in the UK, in their emphasis on individual responsibility for securing employment, assume that all degrees from all HE institutions equip graduates with similar levels of 'graduateness' (Warhurst & Thompson, 2006) and predict similar employment outcomes for all, based on self-directedness. This chapter questions the validity of this assumption.

The layout of this chapter is as follows. It first reviews the definitional issues in employability. It then narrows the scope of analysis to graduate employability. Here, graduate employability is discussed from policy, employer, university and individual perspectives. In light of this conceptual analysis, it reviews the evidence on 'who gets the better jobs' to determine how employability translates in reality upon graduation from university. This review suggests that conceptual definitions of graduate employability, particularly those by skills policies and career research, fail to account for the systematic differences in

graduates' access to good jobs. It then discusses explanations based on unobserved heterogeneity and positional conflict in accounting for these differences. The chapter concludes with a summary and identifies areas of further research on graduate employability that are still left unexplored but would contribute to our understanding of contemporary graduate careers.

Definitional issues on employability

Changes witnessed in work organisation in the latter part of the 20th century are claimed to have affected work careers (Arnold, 1997a; R. E. Miles & Snow, 1996; Mirvis & Hall, 1994; Storey, 2000). The 'new' career literature, following Arthur and Rousseau's (1996) work on the 'boundaryless career', focuses on the demise of the traditional career within a single firm. The traditional hierarchical employment systems based on the conception of labour are argued to be "incompatible with the emergent reality of persistent change", as today intellectual capital is argued to be of more interest to employers (Littleton, Arthur, & Rousseau, 2000). Accordingly, Arthur (2008) defines contemporary careers as:

being responsive to: a) shifting boundaries in occupational, organizational, national and global work arrangements; b) higher uncertainty given the rapid generation of knowledge and the unpredictability of its effects; and c) greater *individual agency*, not only as a response to shifting boundaries and uncertainty, but also because of the wider combinations of job experiences that can be incorporated into one career (p. 168, italics added).

It is argued that the psychological contract² has changed such that employees no longer exchange hard work and loyalty for financial rewards and job security but they exchange hard work for employability enhancing opportunities (such as skills development and training) (Herriot & Pemberton, 1995; Hiltrop, 1995; Robinson, Kraatz, & Rousseau, 1994). The notion of 'job for life' is replaced with that of 'employability for life' and the emphasis in career management has shifted from the organisation to the individual. This also corresponds to a shift of responsibility for employability and blame for failure to secure employment from the state to the individual within policy discussions (Hesketh, 2003).

This shift in responsibility in the 'new' career discourse is also reflected in the notion of a protean career, referring to careers that are driven by individual values and self-directed, and the success criteria are subjective (Hall, 1996, 2004). The prerequisite for successfully managing careers in this view lies in learning/knowing about oneself and taking initiatives to direct careers (De Vos, De Clippeleer, & Dewilde, 2009). Overall then the boundaryless careers literature places emphasis on the limitless opportunities in the labour market, while the protean career approach emphasises individual proactiveness in achieving career goals (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). In this context, employability is the buzzword of the 'new' career.

Ironically, despite being at the centre of attention of career research and policy discourse, there is a lack of consensus on what employability refers to. Defined

² The psychological contract is defined as "an unwritten contract that embodies the expectations that an organisation and an individual have of the other in terms of their future relationship and outcomes" (Inkson & King, 2011, p. 42).

very broadly, employability refers to “the capability to gain initial employment, maintain employment and obtain new employment if required” (Hillage & Pollard, 1998, p. 1) and “the individual’s perception of his or her possibilities of acquiring equivalent or better employment” (Berntson, Naswall, & Sverke, 2008, p. 2). This suggests that the outcome of employability is employment on the individual’s part. The difficulty arises in defining ‘how’ employment is secured and maintained. This is argued to be determined by a combination of human capital, social capital, career identity and adaptability by different strands of research (e.g., De Fillippi & Arthur, 1994; Forrier et al., 2009; Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004; McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, & Hall, 2007; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006).

Human Capital Theory (HCT; Becker, 1964) suggests that employment and higher earnings will be associated with the individual’s accumulated human capital, which refers to “a stock of intellectual assets that one owns, which allows one to receive a flow of income – something which is akin to the interest earned from financial assets” (Walker & Zhu, 2007, p. 14). Human capital is not only associated with education (Becker, 1964) but also with work experience, allocation of different jobs, organisational support, training and cognitive ability (Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995; Kirchmeyer, 1998; Tharenou, 1997; Tharenou, Latimer, & Conroy, 1994; Van der Heijden, 2003a, 2003b). Human capital, or occupational expertise, is argued to be an essential component of employability as it provides continuity of work and career development

opportunities for the individual (De Vos, De Hauw, & Van der Heijden, 2011; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006).

Social capital refers to “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). Social capital is argued to be instrumental in employability and career success due to its effects on access to and flow of information and on the power of influence over gatekeepers it affords the individual via social networks (Adler & Kwon, 2002; McArdle et al., 2007; Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001; Van der Heijden, Boon, Van der Klink, & Meijjs, 2009).

Self-awareness, or career identity, in relation to employability refers to an individual’s career motivation, reflected in questions such as ‘who I am?’ and ‘who I want to be?’ (Holmes, 2001, 2011). This is argued to provide a direction for career related activities by clarifying an individual’s goals and motives (Fugate et al., 2004; Ng & Feldman, 2007) and by anticipation and optimisation of future changes according to personal preferences (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006). Hence, career identity provides an indication of ‘employability for what’.

Adaptability refers to an individual’s willingness and ability to change behaviour, thoughts and feelings in the face of changing demands from the environment (Ashford & Taylor, 1990). In relation to employability, this relates to personal flexibility to changing labour market conditions, work demands and work organisation. For the individual, this connotes resilience in the face of

obstacles and proactive behaviour to secure and maintain employment (Fugate et al., 2004; Klehe, Zikic, Van Vianen, Koen, & Buyken, 2012; Koen, Klehe, & Van Vianen, 2012; McArdle et al., 2007; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006).

Attempts have been made at bringing these different components together in one definition of employability. Forrier et al., (2009) refer to movement capital as encompassing human and social, self-awareness and adaptability. From a dispositional perspective, Fugate et al., (2004) define employability as a “psycho-social construct that embodies individual characteristics that foster adaptive cognition, behaviour, and affect, and enhance the individual-work interface” (p. 15). De Fillippi and Arthur (1994) identify three career competencies associated with success in the new career as: *know-how* (career-related knowledge and skills that accumulate over time); *know-whom* (career-related networks); and *know-why* (an individual’s career motivation, personal meaning and identification). Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden (2006) similarly offer a competency-based view and define employability as “the continuous fulfilling, acquiring or creating of work through the optimal use of competencies” (p. 453).

Two main observations can be made from this definitional ambiguity. The first observation is that today, at least in theory, securing and maintaining employment requires much more than knowledge, skills and abilities, despite the ‘knowledge-economy’ being argued to revolve around the individual’s intellectual abilities. Secondly, employability encompasses not only behaviours to secure and maintain employment but also the individual’s cognition,

perception and affect with regards to current and future employment. This places career self-management at the heart of developing employability.

Career self-management

Career self-management (CSM) refers to “the degree to which one regularly gathers information and plans for career problem solving and decision making” (Kossek, Roberts, Fisher, & DeMarr, 1998, p. 938). Through CSM, it is argued, individuals gain awareness of themselves and the labour market and devise career strategies (Greenhaus, 1987), and, hence, develop a relatively realistic view of their own skills, abilities and ambitions, and the opportunities that are available in the environment (de Vos, Dewettinck, & Buyens, 2009). At a broader level, the Council of European Union places emphasis on lifelong acquisition of career management skills: “a whole range of competencies which provide structured ways for individuals and groups to gather, analyse, synthesise and organise self, educational and occupational information, as well as the skills to make and implement decisions and transitions” or as in the Italian translation “to become protagonists of their life project” (Sultana, 2012, p. 229).

CSM is argued to be self-regulatory and motivational; it involves selecting goals and devising strategies for implementing them (Locke & Latham, 2002). Through self-regulation, the individual is argued to influence her own cognitive processes and behaviour, and, in turn, act on the environment (Bandura, 1986; Karoly, 1993). King (2001) argues that career management is necessarily bounded by gatekeepers, i.e., those who make decisions that affect individuals’

careers (e.g., selection, promotion), and that, contrary to the discourse on the 'new' career, individuals do not have full decision latitude over their career goals. In this sense, she argues, CSM refers to the motivated and self-regulated process of influencing the decision making of the gatekeepers in favour of the individual to secure and maintain employment (King, 2004).

While there is no consensus on what behaviours reflect CSM, the literature on new entrants to the labour market commonly stress the importance of career exploration (e.g., Brown, Darden, Shelton, & Dipoto, 1999; Fan, Cheung, Leong, & Cheung, 2012; Porfeli & Skorikov, 2010; Shea, Ma, Yeh, Lee, & Pituc, 2009), which refers "to a complex psychological process, which sustains the search of information, as well as hypothesis testing about self and environment, in order to attain career goals" (Taveira & Moreno, 2003, p. 190). Kossek et al., (1998) differentiate between developmental feedback seeking and job mobility preparedness in relation to CSM, for employed individuals to improve their careers. Developmental feedback seeking is argued to be important to determine developmental needs and to develop a realistic assessment of individuals' talents and abilities, and possible career plans, and is, therefore, similar to career exploration in conceptualisation. Job mobility preparedness relates to gathering information regarding career opportunities through, for instance, job search and networking (Kossek et al., 1998). King (2004) offers three main domains where CSM is visible, again for employed workers: positioning (strategic choice of career options, investment in human capital and networking), influence (e.g., self-promotion and ingratiation) and boundary

management (maintaining a balance between different life roles). These different conceptualisations based on the working population suggest a role for, among other behaviours, job search and networking as important components to CSM, in addition to career exploration which would apply to new entrants and un/employed job seekers.

From a vocational psychology perspective, career exploration refers to an information seeking and/or problem-solving behaviour, as reflected in the learning theory of career choice and counselling (Krumboltz, Mitchell, & Jones, 1976). Career decision making theory treats career exploration as an important phase in the process of decision making as it involves identifying and evaluating options (Tiedeman & O'Hara, 1963). From a developmental perspective, career exploration forms a major life stage (prescribed to ages between 14 and 24), which involves crystallisation, specification and implementation of career choice (Super et al., 1957). More recently, career exploration has been taken to reflect a life-span process involving career learning and development (Blustein, 1997; Jordaan, 1963). It is argued that career exploration has a particular importance in the contemporary world of work, which is characterised by increased uncertainty and instability (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), as it provides an advantage in negotiating one's way through these changes (Blustein, 1997), help in understanding one's expectations and preferences from work (Sturges & Guest, 2001) and indicates proactive behaviour (Zikic & Klehe, 2006).

In addition to career exploration, a second behaviour related to CSM is job search. It refers to the effort and time individuals put into acquiring information

about the alternatives in the labour market and, thereby, generating employment opportunities (Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001). Job search, too, is a motivated and self-regulated process, in that identification of the employment/career goal initiates job search activities and the person develops plans and, monitors and analyses progresses towards the achievement of this goal (Barber, Daly, Giannantonio, & Phillips, 1994). For new entrants into the labour market, job search occurs when they are still in the process of developing career goals and strategies (Quint & Kopelman, 1995) and is, therefore, argued to be crucial in understanding of and adaptability to the labour market (Bell & Kozlowski, 2008). For those who have already started engaging in career exploration, job search sets the ground for a better congruence between jobs and their skills, abilities and preferences (Saks & Ashforth, 2002) as it is associated with job search clarity (Zikic & Saks, 2009).

Related to job search, networking can be defined as “individual actions directed toward contacting friends, acquaintances, and other people to whom the job seeker has been referred for the main purpose of getting information, leads, or advice on getting a job” (Wanberg, Kanfer, & Banas, 2000, p. 492). Networking contributes to CSM in two ways. Firstly, it contributes to effective job search. Social relationships affect the flow of job/vacancy relevant information and, therefore, are argued to impact the job search process (Granovetter, 1973, 2005; Raider & Burt, 1996). Secondly, networking allows development of social capital, which is argued to be one of the necessary competencies in today’s ‘new’ careers (Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003).

Based on this review, it can be argued that employability is, in part, formed as a result of engaging in the process of CSM (Bridgstock, 2009; Holmes, 2011). In fact, it has been demonstrated that the first experience of job search, networking (Barber, 1998) and career exploration (Eby et al., 2003) were related to perceived employability. Hence, it can be argued that through CSM individuals develop an understanding of where they stand relative to others in the competition for jobs and how they can negotiate with the gatekeepers to secure and maintain employment. This chapter next examines employability as it is referred to in the UK GLM.

Graduate employability

The UK Commission for Employability and Skills (UKCES, 2009) defines employability in rather generic terms as “the skills almost everyone needs to do almost any job. They are the skills that must be present to enable an individual to use the more specific knowledge and technical skills that their particular workplaces will require” (p. 10). The Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC, 1996) slightly narrows this down and states that as a result of their higher education experiences graduates are expected to possess certain skills and qualities, referred to as their ‘graduateness’. These include: self-reliance skills (e.g., self-awareness, proactivity and networking); people skills (e.g., team working, interpersonal skills, oral communication); general management skills (e.g., problem solving, flexibility, numeracy); and specialist skills (e.g., specific occupational skills and technical skills) (UKCES, 2009). This suggests, from a skills policy perspective, there is acknowledgement that employability is not

solely based on knowledge, skills and abilities, as reflected in the inclusion of components such as self-awareness and networking. Yet, while taking note of this, these reports commonly refer to certain 'skills' in relation to graduate employability, and hence, appear to be based on the HCT.

What employers want appears to correspond to what the skills policies suggest to a large extent but with a few important differences. The Association of Graduate Recruiters state that they are increasingly looking for "employability skills as well as academic attainment in graduates" (AGR, 2010, p. 4). In fact, the AGR (2010) have called for the abolishment of the 50 per cent HE participation rate vision as this was not contributing to their productivity but was merely lowering the value of a degree in the labour market. In the face of increasing graduate supply, most graduate recruiters have moved away from citing required qualifications toward required competencies (Purcell, Morley & Rowley, 2002), and the list of desired attributes appears to grow longer as the supply increases (Harvey, Moon, & Geall, 1997). Brown, Lauder and Ashton (2008) report that employers "found it difficult to relate to the [government's] 'skills' discourse" (p. 16), as from their perspective employability was generally found to mean work-readiness (Pittaway & Thedham, 2005; Stewart & Knowles, 2000) and they commonly refer to graduate attributes (e.g., self-starter, enthusiastic) rather than skills (Holmes, 2001). While some of the skills highlighted by policy papers (e.g., communication, teamworking, literacy and numeracy) are in the top 10 attributes employers are looking for when recruiting graduates, so are confidence, personality and character (Archer &

Davison, 2008; Connor & Brown, 2009). Brown and Hesketh (2004), for instance, observed that social considerations, such as those of appearance, social fit and personal chemistry, have become much more important in graduate recruitment and selection. This suggests that in the face of increasing graduate supply, 'graduateness', as envisioned by the skills policies, is not sufficient to secure the limited highly skilled jobs (Hinchliffe & Jolly, 2010).

Skills policies in the UK see HE as one of the most important assets in achieving the 'high skills, high wages' vision. This pushes universities to take a more utilitarian approach to HE. This is reflected in the DfES (2003b) statement that:

In a fast-changing and increasingly competitive world, the role of higher education in equipping the labour force with appropriate and relevant skills, in stimulating innovation and supporting productivity and in enriching the quality of life is central. The benefits of an excellent higher education system are far-reaching; the risk of decline is one that we cannot accept.

Universities are, therefore, increasingly under pressure to equip students with the employability skills beyond academic knowledge and skills that are sought after by employers. This resulted in changes to course content and teaching methods, introduction of new courses and provision of opportunities for students to engage in work experience (Mason, Williams, & Cranmer, 2009). In particular, universities are encouraged to engage in partnerships with employers in increasing students' employability via adapting curricula to employers' needs and embedding work experience to HE (BIS, 2012; CBI, 2007, 2009; Hills, Robertson, Walker, Adey, & Nixon, 2003). This type of collaboration

is now commonly seen, particularly in the post-1992 universities which offer courses geared towards niche occupations (e.g., Ehiyazaryan & Barraclough, 2009; Fallows & Steven, 2000). It has been reported that employer-based training and work experience is positively related to graduates' employment-outcomes upon graduation (Cranmer, 2006; Mason et al., 2009). Graduate employment outcomes, as indicated by graduate destinations six months after graduation, are now included in the performance indicators for universities (HEFCE, 2001, 2011). Hence, it appears that what graduate employability means in the UK, for the most part, is governed by the skills policies and employers and that the role of universities is limited to complying with these requirements.

Despite great emphasis on graduate employability, what this means for graduates and how they manage their employability, is relatively under-researched. Tomlinson's (2007, 2008) work on final year university students in a pre-1992 university suggests that while expecting to earn higher wages than non-graduates, most see their degree as not being enough to secure good jobs. In differentiating and positioning themselves in the GLM, students commonly refer to certain tactics to bring their credentials forward: achieving higher degree classifications, beliefs that the prestigious name of their university provides a positional advantage, engaging in extracurricular activities and work experience, and pursuing postgraduate education (Alison, Bowes, Harvey, Hesketh, & Knight, 2001; Bowman, 2005; Bromnick, Horowitz, & Shepherd, 2012; Roulin & Bangerter, 2011; Smetherham, 2006b; Taylor & Pick, 2008;

Tomlinson, 2007). Students' perceptions of what employers were looking for matched closely with the list of skills and attributes employers and skills policies refer to (e.g., communication and teamwork); while they felt that they had developed the attitudinal and personality related attributes sought after by employers (e.g., self-reliance and self-awareness) via their degree courses their self-ratings of these were relatively poor in comparison to the development of work skills (Atfield & Purcell, 2010). In understanding how graduates manage their employability, Tomlinson (2007) reported three types of student orientations to employability: (1) careerists, who developed a strong labour market orientation and career identities, and were active in pursuing their goals, in particular via developing credentials; (2) ritualists, who also had a strong labour market orientation but were passive in pursuit of their goals (and were more likely to succumb to less competitive but more secure jobs) as they did not see work as central to their life; and (3) retreatists, who were indifferent to the labour market and were, therefore, passive in enhancing employability.

This brief review of graduate employability in the UK suggests that there is great emphasis on the government's side on gradueness skills, as these are perceived to be the essential component of a 'high skills' economy. In the face of such diversity in the graduate workforce, however, employers appear to struggle in differentiating between graduates for their limited vacancies and to increasingly change the employability criteria to include attributes that are not readily observable. This puts pressure on the universities, as they are largely relied on by the skills policies to supply the 'high skills' and also part of their

funding is now dependent on graduate employability. Graduates, on the other hand, appear to be aware that securing employment is not easy in today's GLM, yet we know very little as to how they manage their employability, with a few exceptions where there are studies on final year students. This chapter next examines 'who gets the better jobs' in the GLM to have a better understanding of how employability translates in practice.

Who gets the better jobs?

Research on employer practices in recruitment and selection of graduates has suggested that implicit discrimination towards middle class applications may be taking place with the use of competencies (Purcell et al., 2002). This is because, it is argued, the skills and competencies employers are looking for today are socially constructed based on the competencies of their senior management, and, hence, are gendered, classed and racialised (Brown & Hesketh, 2004; Leathwood & O'Connell, 2003; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006; Purcell & Hogarth, 1999). In this sense, the inequalities in the labour market are argued to be rising with the expansion of HE because the jobs on the higher end are assigned to those who are of more advantaged social backgrounds (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006), due to their cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964). It has been demonstrated, for instance, that students from disadvantaged backgrounds engage in fewer extra-curricular activities and work placements/internships during their university education, which have been shown to positively contribute to social capital and, hence, to employment outcomes (Blasko, Brennan, Little, & Shah, 2002), to such an extent that for

some “graduation ceremonies were the only fully ‘extra-curricular’ activities in which they participated” (Redmond, 2006, p. 127).

Not surprisingly then, in terms of access to high skilled ‘graduate’ occupations, graduates from working class backgrounds were found more likely to be working in non-graduate occupations and to earn significantly less than their middle class counterparts (Blasko et al., 2002; Brown & Scase, 1994; Leathwood & O’Connell, 2003; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006; Purcell & Hogarth, 1999; Smith, McKnight & Naylor, 2000). Blasko et al. (2002) differentiate between *direct* and *indirect* effects of background. The authors argue that direct effects of social background come into play when graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds face more difficulties in the labour market in comparison to others who have similar educational tracks. The indirect effect is argued to be through educational experiences (i.e., type of university, degree subject and degree class). For instance, graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to have attended pre-1992 universities, studied non-professional degree subjects and more likely to have attained lower degree classifications in comparison to middle class graduates (Blasko et al., 2002; Committee of Public Accounts, 2009; Leathwood & O’Connell, 2003; Reay, Davies, David, & Ball, 2001). Hence, the impact of social background on labour market outcomes is argued to be hidden and ‘institutionalised’ (Brown, 2004).

Looking at graduate distributions based on educational history, we see that graduates from pre-1992 universities, professional degree courses (e.g., medicine) and those with 1st or 2:1 degree classifications are more likely to be

working in high skilled 'graduate' occupations, in comparison to those from post-1992 universities, non-professional degree courses (e.g., humanities) and those with 2:2 or lower classifications (Blasko et al., 2002; Brennan, Johnston, Little, Shah, & Woodley, 2001; HECSU, 2011; Smetherham, 2006b). These findings raise the question 'are some graduates more equal' in access to good jobs, which is examined next.

Are some graduates 'more equal' than others?

The evidence above suggests that, despite the skills policy discourse arguing for a meritocratic labour market where demographic characteristics, such as age, race, gender and social class, are irrelevant in determining employability (Brown, 2003), systematic differences in access to good jobs exist. Two perspectives have been offered in explaining these differences based on social and educational background. According to labour economists, this reflects the unobserved heterogeneity amongst graduates, while sociologists contest that this is due to a positional conflict created with widening participation in HE.

The unobserved heterogeneity thesis

Concerns have been raised with regards to the quality of graduates. These were mainly due to students from lower ability levels being given access to HE; students now being unable to develop the necessary skills during HE due to lowered investment per student and higher staff/student ratios; and the new degree programmes developed to attract students being of little value in the labour market (Chevalier & Lindley, 2006; Walker & Zhu, 2005). This variability in graduate quality is taken to reflect the unobserved heterogeneity

amongst the graduate supply by labour economists in accounting for employment outcomes (Battu, Belfield, & Sloane, 2003; Ireland et al., 2009; Mavromaras, McGuinness, O'Leary, Sloane, & Fok, 2010; Mavromaras, McGuinness, O'Leary, Sloane, & Fok, 2009). Hence, the unobserved heterogeneity argument suggests that employment in traditionally non-graduate occupations may reflect employment commensurate with the knowledge, skills and abilities of some graduates (Chevalier, 2000).

Chevalier (2000, 2003; Chevalier & Lindley, 2006), for instance, differentiates between 'apparently' and 'genuinely' overqualified graduates. He argues that skilled graduates are employed in 'graduate' level jobs or upgraded non-graduate jobs (i.e., intermediate skilled jobs), whereas less-skilled graduates are either employed in upgraded non-graduate intermediate skilled jobs or non-graduate jobs. According to this classification, employment in upgraded non-graduate intermediate skilled jobs represents 'genuine' overqualification for skilled graduates and only 'apparent' overqualification for the less skilled. Graduates who are 'genuinely' overqualified are those who are dissatisfied with their skills (mis)match. Similarly, Green and Zhu (2008, 2010) differentiate between 'formal' and 'real' overqualification, where the former reflects a mismatch between the qualification and the job, while in the latter the individual also reports skills underutilisation.

Based on this, labour economists differentiate between overqualification and overskilling in the GLM, and report that the correlation between the two is as low as 0.20 (Green & McIntosh, 2007). It is argued that graduate employment in

non-graduate occupations may reflect some degree of overqualification, yet not necessarily overskilling as these graduates are assumed to be of lower knowledge, skills and abilities. Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated that employability skills development (conceptualised as the skills required by employers) does not necessarily guarantee graduate level employment (Wilton, 2011). This suggests that graduate outcomes and, hence, graduate employability, may not be solely tied to development of human capital in the GLM.

The positional conflict view

Brown and colleagues (Brown, 2003; Brown & Hesketh, 2004; Brown et al., 2003) argue that employability consists of absolute and relative components. In this definition, employability is referred to as the relative chances of acquiring and maintaining different kinds of employment. The absolute component refers to the knowledge, skills and abilities of the person required to do the job while the latter refers to how one stands relative to others within the hierarchy of job seekers. Within this perspective, if the opportunities that were made available in access to HE were realised in terms of labour market outcomes, as HE expansion policies assume, then graduates would have 'equal opportunities' in access to graduate level jobs and the systematic differences cited above would not be observed.

Positional conflict theory (Brown, 2000) differentiates between membership, meritocratic and market rules of inclusion and exclusion. Membership rules refer to inclusion or exclusion based on one's attributes, such as gender,

nationality and social class; meritocratic rules refer to that based on achievement in an equal contest; and market rules refer to the price mechanism based on supply and demand in the labour market. Positional conflict theory, predicts that social elites will make use of their financial and cultural resources to acquire higher and 'better' credentials, to secure their advantage in the competition. The finding that graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to have less prestigious education histories (as reflected in the university type, degree course and degree achievement) and more likely to be underemployed upon graduation supports this view (Leathwood, 2004; Leathwood & Hutchings, 2003). It is argued that the expansion of HE reflects credential inflation (Brown, 2003). As in financial inflation, as the supply of the commodity (credentials) increases at a greater pace than the demand for it in the labour market, the value attached to credentials will weaken, as observed in the AGR's (2010) call for abolishment of 50 per cent HE participation rate vision amongst the school leavers. This is argued to create a zero-sum game, where the winners, the social elites, secure higher skilled jobs and the losers, those who are from lower social classes and/or have less prestigious educational credentials, are assigned to non-graduate jobs in the graduate labour market (Brown, 2000). Supporting this view, Leathwood and O'Connell (2003) concluded that the "vision of limitless potential and individual advancement is rooted in a fantasy of classlessness, based on the myths of meritocracy" (p. 599).

Combining these views with the limited research on how graduates manage their employability suggests that graduates may be taking both the unobserved heterogeneity (as observed in putting emphasis on achieving higher degree classifications, engaging in work experience and pursuing postgraduate qualifications) and the positional conflict views (as observed in the beliefs regarding the prestige of the university and engagement in extra-curricular activities). Yet, the great majority of this limited research uses final year students which limits our understanding of 'graduate' employability further. Moreover, both of these perspectives while informing us on the role of human capital and social capital, fail to take into account the role of career identity and adaptability, the two other theoretical components of employability.

Chapter conclusions

Based on the increasing emphasis placed on employability in securing employment and developing careers by skills policies and the 'new' career discourse, this chapter reviewed the literature on employability in general and graduate employability in particular. It is clear from this review that there are definitional ambiguities in employability. In particular, there appears to be an inconsistency between theoretical and practical definitions of employability.

Employability, from a career theory perspective, is argued to be related to not only one's knowledge, skills and abilities (i.e., human capital) but to social capital, self-awareness and adaptability to changing environmental conditions, and developed via CSM. Graduate employability in the UK, however, appears to be largely driven by skills policies and employer practices with the onus largely

placed on universities and the graduate. The UK skills policy perspective, in particular, appears to be largely based on a human capital argument. This either reflects a genuine belief on the part of the government that the opportunities in the GLM are solely based on merit or an understandable difficulty in acknowledging that they are not, as this would contradict the equal opportunities rhetoric. Considering the former HE minister Margaret Hodge's rather unfortunate statement with regards to 'Mickey Mouse' courses (i.e., new degree courses offered in new universities that are geared towards a very limited and niche area of work in the labour market) "*that may not have huge relevance in the labour market*" (BBC, 2003), there is reason to suspect that perhaps the latter is in play.

Research on graduate employment in the UK unequivocally suggests that access to traditional graduate occupations is, in part, determined by social and educational background. The systematic differences observed in employment outcomes then points out that, if employability really is the key to securing high skilled work and if it is largely determined by self-directedness via career self-management, then social and educational background may have an effect on graduates' career self-management and, hence, employability. Even though the unobserved heterogeneity and the positional conflict views have been largely supported by research in their respective fields, there is also some evidence to suggest that some graduates are likely to engage in certain behaviours (e.g., players' impression management) to secure the limited high skilled jobs, while others' do not (i.e., purists) regardless and/or despite their social and

educational background (Brown & Hesketh, 2004; Tomlinson, 2004). These differences possibly reflect the variability in graduates' career identity and adaptability, which receive little or no attention in the economics and sociology perspectives to graduate employability.

This review suggests that there is a scarcity of research examining 'how' graduates take responsibility for their employability. Employability as a process (Bridgstock, 2009; Holmes, 2011; Tomlinson, 2010), developed via CSM within social and educational constraints, is largely left unexplored. Hence, interventions in increasing graduate employability are limited to pressuring universities for changes to curricula and teaching methods, based on the assumption that graduate employability is reflected in gradueness skills, which found little support in the literature (Wilton, 2011). Understanding contemporary graduate careers requires that we also understand how graduates "secure, maintain and if required obtain new employment" (Hillage & Pollard, 1998). Thus, in contributing to this research's overarching aim, understanding how graduates develop employability to secure high skilled work upon graduation is of paramount importance.

A second area of research that arises as a result of this review concerns the occupational boundaries of the GLM. In a utopian GLM where all degree courses from all HE institutions provide the same level of gradueness for all, are we still likely to observe that some graduates find employment in traditionally non-graduate work, simply because there are not enough 'good' jobs? Chapter Three examines the availability and quality of today's graduate occupations.

Chapter Three

3. OCCUPATIONAL BOUNDARIES OF THE GRADUATE LABOUR MARKET

Introduction

Skills policies in the UK are reluctant to intervene on the demand side of the labour market. On the contrary, an increasing neoliberalisation is observed with the assumption that employers will efficiently utilise and develop the increasing skills stock (Keep & Mayhew, 2004). In terms of employment outcomes for graduates this assumes that “where supply leads, demand will follow” (Wilson, 2008, p.1). This is based on a consensus view of the knowledge economy that employees in the 21st century would be required to use higher skills and discretion at work, and, in turn, earn higher wages (Castells, 1996; Florida, 2002). Particularly for graduates, this means jobs where they can use and develop their knowledge and skills, and, therefore, achieve economic and social fulfilment in their lives (DfES, 2006). Nevertheless, a corresponding increase in the overqualified workforce that matches the graduate supply has been observed (Green & Zhu, 2010). Low and intermediate skilled occupations are increasingly the first destinations for a majority of graduates (Coates & Edwards, 2011; Kitchen, Lloyd, Vignoles, & Finch, 2008). Concerns have been raised, therefore, regarding a possible mismatch of skills between available

graduate jobs and those of graduates (Chevalier & Lindley, 2006; Walker & Zhu, 2008). Against the backdrop of these concerns, this chapter reviews the evidence in relation to graduate employment in the UK GLM, specifically focusing on availability and quality of today's 'graduate' occupations. In understanding contemporary graduate careers, this informs us of the terrain within which careers are realised. Hence, understanding the occupational boundaries within which graduate careers are realised forms the second objective of this research.

As observed in Chapter Two, with regards to graduate employment, universities in the UK are now increasingly pressurised to equip graduates with employability skills and work-readiness, yet there has been a lack of interest/attention in the demand side concerning graduate utilisation. Hence, it appears, the responsibility was put on HE for the supply of 'high skills' but not on the employers for that of 'high wages' in achieving the 'high skills, high wages' vision. International comparisons with the US and Europe reveal that in contrast to the dreams of increased competitiveness via skills policies, the UK is actually lagging behind in productivity (Futureskills Scotland, 2007). Futureskills Scotland draws attention to skills/productivity comparisons between Scotland and England, and between Canada and the US. In both cases, the former nations display higher proportions of skilled workforce yet lower productivity compared to latter. The report concludes that "upskilling a workforce without a corresponding improvement in the equipment they use or the markets they service will rarely achieve more than a marginal improvement

in overall productivity, and little more in profit for the business” (p. 7). Clear evidence of this is the achievement of ‘more and better jobs’ demonstrated by Denmark, Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands. Compared to the rest of the EU-15, these countries have particularly high employment rates, low levels of inequality and poverty, and high levels of productivity. What sets these countries apart is that as well as investing in education, they have also increased investment in research and development (R&D), and the ICTs to realise the high skills vision (Raveaud, 2007). This highlights the crucial role demand side policies play by complementing the increasing supply of skills in achieving a ‘high skills, high wages’ vision.

Perhaps one reason for the lack of attention on supply side interventions is due to an underestimation of the severity of the problem created by graduates’ underemployment. For instance, it is argued that underemployment in low-skilled occupations is a temporary phenomenon in graduate careers (Purcell et al., 2005) and that “evidence of graduate underemployment remains limited” (Elias & Purcell, 2004a, p. 73). This, nevertheless, introduces yet another problem for theory and practice. Little is known with regards to job quality in the commonly intermediate skilled jobs they move onto. With the aim of understanding the territory of contemporary graduate careers this chapter reviews the literature on job quality in graduate occupations.

The layout of this chapter is as follows. It first discusses the debates in relation to overall job quality in the UK. This introduces the ‘upskilling’ and job polarisation arguments as competing perspectives with regards to the changes

brought about with the information technology revolution of the 20th century. It then examines job quality in the GLM. Two different perspectives in relation to graduates' employment in intermediate skilled occupations are considered. First, it examines the literature treating 'emerging' occupations as the 'new' graduate occupations. Secondly, it concentrates on the argument that these occupations are 'rebadged' to justify graduates' employment in them. Here, it reviews evidence of job quality from the overall labour market between high and intermediate skilled occupations from a multi-disciplinary perspective. It concludes with a summary and discussion of the literature with regards to the evidence on the occupational boundaries of the GLM.

Job quality in the UK

The proponents of the knowledge economy thesis liken the information technology revolution of the late 20th century to the industrial revolution of the 18th century in the magnitude of its impact on work organisation (e.g., Castells, 1996) and argue that technological change leads to a 'skill-biased' change in the labour market favouring highly skilled workers, relative to the demand for low-skilled workers (Machin, 2001). Knowledge workers (i.e., those who access, create and use information and add value to organisations and shareholders) are, thus, argued to be the key players in the economy in this 'upskilling' approach. This optimistic view foresees the majority of the new jobs created in the next decade to require a university degree (Florida, 2002; Reich, 1991). In support of this, Autor, Levy, and Murnane (2003) reported that between 1960 and 1998 there has been a general decline in the labour input of routine tasks,

while that of non-routine tasks has increased. An example of how new technologies change the employment relationship (Rubery & Grimshaw, 2001) is the proliferation of high-performance work systems (HPWS) in the late 20th century.

Despite the rise in HPWS over the last few decades, highly skilled job creation projections in the UK are estimated to be lower than predicted by this optimistic scenario (Beaven et al., 2005; UKCES, 2010) and points to a mismatch between the nation's skills stock and demand for these skills in the economy. For instance, it was reported that in 1986 there were around 300,000 more graduates in the UK labour market than there were available graduate jobs and this estimate had risen to 1.1 million more graduates than there are jobs by 2006 (Felstead, Gallie, Green, & Zhu, 2007).

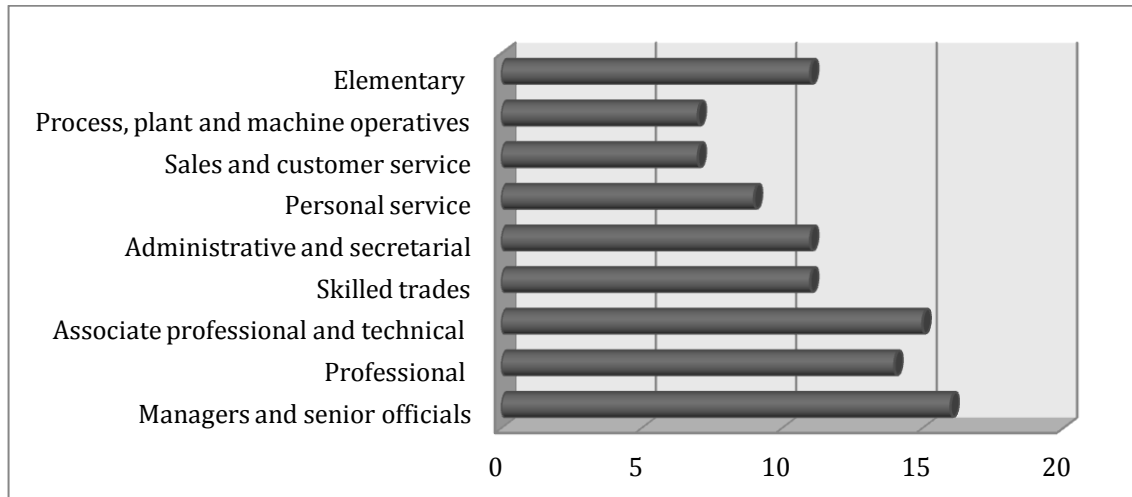
In contrast to this upskilling thesis, Goos and colleagues (Goos & Manning, 2003a, 2003b; Goos, Manning, & Salomons, 2009) reported that employment in the UK has been polarised into 'lovely' (MacJobs) and 'lousy' (McJobs) occupations, the former being mainly concentrated in managerial and professional jobs, while the latter mainly in the low-paid, personal and protective services, and sales occupations. They argue that the skill-biased technological change argument may be less straightforward than proposed and that there is a shift of employment on both ends of the skill spectrum, while a decline is observed in the middle of the spectrum, implying an hourglass economy (Nolan, 2001, 2004). The growing dispersion in wages and skill content implies that job quality is also becoming more unequal. Similar findings

regarding the increasing numbers of both high-skilled 'lovely' and low-skilled 'lousy' jobs relative to middling occupations have been reported by others elsewhere (e.g., Kampelmann & Rycx, 2011; Manning, 2004; Mazzolari & Ragusa, 2007; Michaels, Natraj, & Van Reenen, 2010). This polarisation may be observed in Figure 3.1, describing the distribution of employment in the UK using data from the Labour Force Survey 2009. It is evident here that 45 per cent of the employment in the UK is in low skilled occupations (e.g., elementary, personal service and sales and customer service occupations), 30 per cent was in highly skilled occupations (e.g., professional and managerial occupations) and the remaining 25 per cent was in intermediately skilled occupations (e.g., associate professional and skilled trades occupations), suggesting a 'heavy-bottom' hour-glass economy. This is argued to be due to key growth areas in employment being in the service sector, especially in low skill, low wage jobs (Thompson, Warhurst, & Callaghan, 2001)³. In other words, "the affluent economy sees a return of servant occupations, there to pack bags, clean floors, and secure property – a renaissance which mocks earlier expectations that the

³ It is also worth mentioning here that certain socio-political changes that have taken place in the last few decades have contributed to this polarisation. Firstly, a number of policies were introduced to increase labour market participation, in the form of, for instance, Jobseekers Allowance and tax credits for single parents. This, by targeting the previously economically inactive individuals contributed to increasing employment at the 'lousy' end of the labour market (Mason, Mayhew, & Osborne, 2008). Secondly, via several legislations (e.g., 1984 Employment Act and 1993 Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act), collective employee rights have been largely weakened while employers' power has been enhanced, with the aim of liberalising labour and capital markets (Smith & Morton, 2006). Hence, union coverage, trade union membership levels and the proportion of workers whose pay and working conditions was set by collective bargaining has been declining (Achur, 2009; Lapido & Wilkinson, 2002). Lastly, despite the introduction of the National Minimum Wage in 1998, decreasing labour market regulations and trade union power have largely contributed to income disparities (Mason & Osborne, 2008).

servant class had disappeared forever in the first part of the twentieth century” (Green, 2006, p. 6) and that “[t]he new economy is not as new as many commentators suppose” (Sengupta, Edwards, & Tsai, 2009, p. 27).

Figure 3.1 Distribution of Employment in the UK, 2009 (%)



Note. Adapted from ONS (2010).

Even though the hour-glass economy thesis proposes a decline in the intermediate occupations, further research and job creation estimates have revealed that this category of occupations has in fact been rather stable (Anderson, 2009; Beaven et al., 2005; Holmes, 2010). According to Anderson (2009) this is mainly due to an increased demand for non-manual intermediate skills (e.g., associate professionals and technical occupations) and a decreased demand for manual intermediate skills (e.g., skilled trades). Despite the increasing demand for associate professional and technical occupations, there is an increasing shortage of individuals with intermediate skills (Mason, Mayhew, Osborne, & Stevens, 2008; Oesch & Rodriguez Menes, 2010), who are commonly viewed as “raw material (i.e., potential students) for HE, rather than as

endpoints for labour-market entry in their own right” (Keep & Mayhew, 2004, p. 304). These positions, in turn, are being filled with university graduates, reflecting graduatisation of intermediate skilled occupations (Anderson, 2009).

This review so far indicates limited availability of highly skilled occupations in the UK. This suggests that as well as being employed in the higher end, a substantial proportion of graduates are also commonly employed in lower and intermediate segments of the labour market. The extent of upskilling in the latter segments to absorb the increasing supply of graduates is yet another debate associated with the high skills vision and is examined next.

Job quality in the UK graduate labour market

There is some debate about what constitutes today’s ‘graduate’ occupations, particularly as skill requirements and careers are changing (Brown & Hesketh, 2004; Hall & Las Heras, 2010) and given the greater heterogeneity amongst graduates’ skills and abilities (Chevalier, 2003). While there is consensus that employment in low skill, low pay occupations indicates graduate underemployment, there is less agreement on that in intermediate skilled occupations. According to some, these intermediate level jobs⁴ are the ‘new’ graduate occupations of the contemporary economy (e.g., Elias & Purcell, 2009), embodying knowledge workers and symbolic analysts, which Florida (2002) included amongst his ‘creative classes’. Others argue that they, in fact, reflect

⁴ Intermediately skilled jobs in this context only refer to associate professional and technical occupations and not to skilled trades as it is argued that it is the former within the intermediate occupations that are ‘graduatised’ (Anderson, 2009).

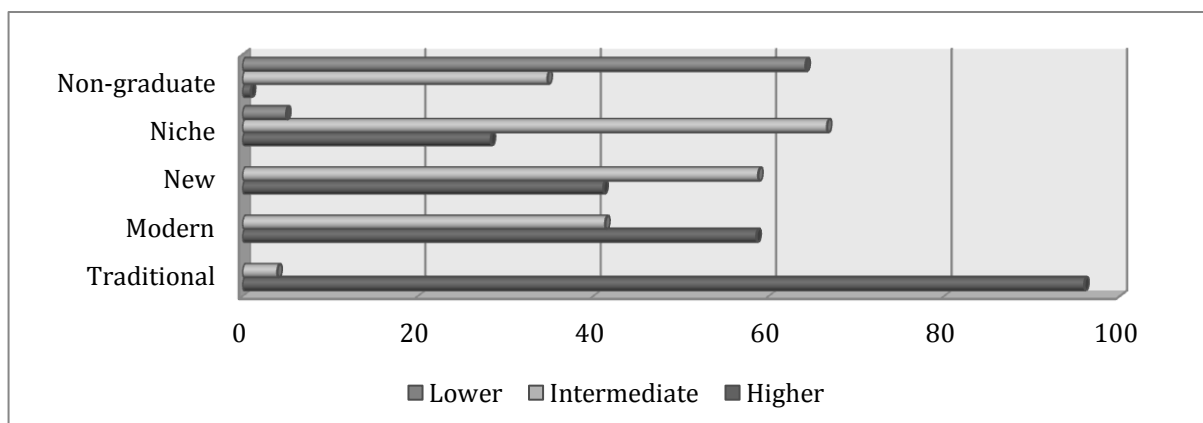
lower skilled yet adequate employment for the less skilled and able graduates (e.g., Chevalier, 2003) as discussed in relation to the unobserved heterogeneity thesis in Chapter Two, while critics suggest that these jobs are just ‘rebadged’ or ‘relabelled’ to justify graduates’ employment (e.g., Warhurst, 2008). Regardless of actual job content, the increasing numbers of degree-qualified workers employed within intermediately skilled occupations identifies them as today’s ‘emerging’ graduate occupations (see also Muzio, Ackroyd, & Chanlat, 2007).

‘New’ graduate occupations

In an effort to differentiate ‘graduate’ occupations from ‘non-graduate’ occupations, Elias and Purcell (2004b) identified three other graduate occupation categories, which either did not exist until the recent HE expansion or did exist but did not historically employ graduates: Modern, New and Niche graduate occupations (SOC(HE)). These new occupations are taken to reflect ‘graduate’ occupations by many academics and government researchers (e.g., HESA, 2008). The distribution of skill levels of the occupations listed under the four graduate occupation categories suggests that almost all of the jobs in traditional graduate occupations are high skilled, requiring a university degree or equivalent work experience (see Figure 3.2). These outweigh intermediate skilled occupations in Modern graduate occupations; however the difference is not as stark as it is with Traditional graduate occupations. A reverse pattern is observed with New and Niche graduate occupations; the proportion of jobs requiring intermediate skills outweighs those requiring high skills. Six months after graduation, one third of graduates in the UK was working in non-graduate

occupations, followed by, in descending order, Niche (23.8%), New (17.2%), Modern (13.8%) and traditional graduate occupations (11.7%) (Prospects, 2009). Approximately three-and-a-half years after graduation, 80 per cent of the graduates of 2002/03 were found to be working in one of these new graduate occupation categories, including the traditional graduate occupations (Kitchen et al., 2008). Not surprisingly then, Elias and Purcell (2004a) report that the density of graduate employment in Modern and New graduate occupations has increased significantly over the last 25 years.

Figure 3.2 Distribution of skill levels across SOC(HE) occupations



Note. Adapted from Elias and Purcell (2004b) and Anderson (2009).

The dominance of intermediate skilled occupations in the New/Niche graduate occupation categories may reflect professionalization of some traditionally non-graduate occupations (e.g., nursing). Access to these 'graduatised' occupations often requires a specific university degree, qualifying professional examinations, and/or relevant work experience, similar to the exclusionary practices employed by established professions (Chillas, 2010). In support of this, those in SOC(HE) graduate occupations reported significantly higher

perceived skill use in comparison to those in non-graduate occupations (Elias & Purcell, 2004a). This could, however, also be explained by the 'status-enhancing effect' of holding a degree qualification in these occupations which traditionally did not employ graduates (Chillas, 2010).

Elias and Purcell (2004b) also report clear graduate and non-graduate occupation differences for earnings and job quality (Elias & Purcell, 2004b; Purcell, Elias & Wilton, 2004). This measurement of job quality, however, underestimates the variability between graduate occupations, as it takes the mean of various job aspects, such as opportunity for skill and career development, job security and salary. Moreover, they maintain that classification was not merely based on the proportion of graduates in SOC2000 unit groups; this external classification, nevertheless, relies heavily on graduate density in various occupations⁵. Hence, it stands relatively theory-free.

While it appears that there is progress in terms of job creation (in the case of Modern graduate occupations) that matches traditional occupations, at least in terms of skill level, the UK picture from New and Niche graduate occupations favours the argument that the supply of graduates is commonly used by

⁵ Traditional graduate occupations are those unit groups in SOC2000 where greater than 60 per cent of the 40 – 54 age group and considerably higher proportion of the 21 – 35 age group hold a first degree in 2001 - 2003. Modern graduate occupations refer to those unit groups in SOC2000 that are not classified as Traditional; and 40 per cent of the former group and 50 per cent of the latter hold a first degree. New graduate occupations are those not classified as either Traditional or Modern, where up to 40 per cent of the younger age group holds a first degree, and where this is at least 10 per cent more than the proportion of the older degree holders (Elias & Purcell, 2004b).

employers to compensate for intermediate skill shortages, which is discussed next.

'Rebadged' intermediate occupations

Graduate underemployment has been associated with graduates' difficulty in securing professional and/or managerial jobs (Walker & Zhu, 2005). According to Mason (2002) "some employers had hardly started to think about ways to upgrade previously non-graduate jobs or to create new jobs to take more advantage of the 'hidden potential' in their midst" (p. 428). Rather, as indicated in Chapter Two, employers of recent graduates are shown to differentiate between the 'cream' and the 'rest', reserving high skilled jobs for the former (AGR, 2010; Harvey et al., 1997; Mason, 1996; Purcell et al., 2002) .

This evidence points out that rather than more jobs being created or upgraded to 'knowledge work', graduates may simply appear to be the best of applicants for traditionally non-graduate jobs (Blenkinsopp & Scurry, 2007). In fact, as noted in Chapter Two the AGR have claimed that they were having difficulty distinguishing between graduates in the face of such diversity in HE (AGR, 2010) for their limited vacancies. Hence, Green and Zhu's (2010) analysis of the UK data between 1992 and 2006 points to increasing overqualification that matches the increase in graduate supply in the labour market. Proponents of the 'upskilling' argument counter this by highlighting the higher graduate earnings in comparison to non-graduates (Elias & Purcell, 2009). However, as graduates are employed in diverse occupations, before jumping to conclusions on the degree premium, and, therefore, job quality and the extent of 'upskilling',

disaggregated data from graduate earnings and other aspects of job quality needs to be considered.

Graduate earnings

Graduates who work in managerial and professional occupations earn significantly more than those in associate professional and lower skilled occupations (Elias & Purcell, 2011; Prospects, 2011). A wage penalty throughout careers for those who cannot progress out of poor quality jobs, especially for those who perceive they are over-educated in early jobs, has been reported repeatedly (e.g., Battu, Belfield, & Sloane, 1999; Lindley & McIntosh, 2009; McGuinness & Sloane, 2011). These findings are important for both economic *and* social prosperity expectations of the UK skills policy. If employers cannot adjust to the unprecedented increase in the supply of this workforce, productivity and, therefore, individuals' income from a job competition perspective will depend on the jobs that are available in the labour market (McGuinness, 2006).

Work skills

By definition an 'upskilled' or 'high skills' society requires higher skills from its workers. For graduates, this is reflected in the Higher Education Quality Council's emphasis on 'graduateness' skills (HEQC, 1996), referring to certain skills and qualities graduates should possess as a result of their HE experiences. Research on employer practices has highlighted that 'graduateness' skills (AGR, 1996) (also called employability skills, such as problem solving, communication and planning) are highly sought after by graduate employers on entry but the

extent to which emerging occupations have become 'graduatised' in this way requires further examination. As highlighted in Chapter Two, the list of employability skills sought by employers appears to be getting longer as more graduates join the labour market (Harvey et al., 1997), including attributes which are not readily definable and measurable, such as self-awareness, proactivity and social fit (Brown & Hesketh, 2004). The focus in this section is on the work skills used by employees on the job that are argued to differentiate graduates from non-graduates (HECSU, 2010), rather than other attributes cited in relation to employability.

If 'emerging' occupations have been upgraded to make better use of a highly skilled workforce, graduates in these occupations should report the same degree of 'graduateness' skills, task discretion and training and development opportunities as those in traditional graduate occupations. After all, DfES (2003a) states "[w]e will only achieve increased productivity and competitiveness if more employers and more employees are encouraged and supported to make the necessary investment in skills" (p. 9). This does not appear to be the case. In terms of use of specific skills, Felstead et al.'s (2007) analysis of the UK workforce showed that, in comparison to those in intermediate or low skilled occupations, high skilled occupations require higher use of influence, literacy and planning skills. In general, overqualified workers in the UK were reported to be working in jobs that required lower problem solving, communication, planning, numeracy, literacy (Green & McIntosh, 2007)

and influence skills (particularly in graduates' case) (Green & Zhu, 2010). These skills correspond to the 'graduateness' skills highlighted by employers.

The variation in the use of work skills in intermediate occupations, in comparison to traditional graduate occupations, was apparent in Purcell et al.'s (2004) examination of graduates' accounts of the substance and the routine daily workloads across SOC(HE) occupations. The results of this exploratory study revealed that the skills used by graduates seven years after graduation may be categorised as expertise; strategic and managerial skills; and interactive skills. Expertise refers to occupation specific knowledge, generally founded on higher education and other training. Strategic and managerial skills include project and process management, leadership, decision-making and risk-taking. Interactive skills generally require the job holder to demonstrate communication skills, negotiation skills, ability to motivate others and team work. It was found that Traditional and Modern graduate occupations require higher expertise and strategic/managerial skills compared to New and Niche graduate occupations. New graduate occupations generally require a hybrid of strategic/managerial and interactive skills, while Niche graduate occupations do not require high skills on either category but usually require a similar combination of the skills required for New graduate occupations to a lesser extent.

This classification resembles Reich's (1991) distinction between routine production services, in-person services and symbolic-analytic services in today's economy. Mapping Reich's (1991) categorisation to Purcell et al.'s

(2004) findings, it can be argued that New and Niche graduate occupations are more likely to be categorised as in-person services, while still having little strategic/managerial skills component; traditional and Modern graduate occupations are more likely to be categorised as symbolic-analytic services due to significantly more expertise and strategic/managerial skills used. The implications for job quality in graduate occupations is that jobs in in-person services, similar to routine production services, do not require high levels of education or skills and offer little task discretion in comparison to symbolic-analytic services.

Task discretion

Task discretion is closely related to work skills; employees in higher level jobs enjoy greater task discretion compared to those in lower level jobs (Green, 2008). A general decline in task discretion across occupations has been reported (Gallie, Felstead, & Green, 2004). This was more pronounced for employees in associate professional, personal service and elementary occupations (Felstead et al., 2007). Confirming this, underemployed graduates repeatedly reported lower responsibility and opportunity to extend their abilities through the job than adequately employed graduates (Fuller, 2006; Tomlinson, 2008). Low levels of task discretion points to employee alienation at work through increasing management control, which implies a hindrance to employee self-development (Osterman, 2000).

Training and development

Employers' choice of providing training and development is, therefore, yet another important aspect of achieving the high skills vision, as individual educational credentials alone do not lead to development through the job (Korpi & Tåhlin, 2009b). Shurry et al.'s (2010) findings from the National Employer Skills Survey for England suggest that total employer expenditure on training and development has declined; correspondingly, approximately one third of employees on the 2004 Workplace Employment Relation Survey did not receive any support (Sutherland, 2009). Employees in managerial and professional occupations are most likely to receive developmental support, such as employer provided job-related training (ONS, 2010), and UK data overall suggests that highly skilled occupations, including the professions, are associated with better job content in terms of discretion and development in comparison to intermediate skilled occupations (Lindsay, Canduela, & Raeside, 2012).

Work intensity

It appears that in trying to achieve productivity and competitiveness there was little change in the UK, in terms of skill use and development, in the 'emerging' graduate occupations that now absorb a great number of graduates. Instead, government and employers have sought to achieve this aim by generally loosening employee rights to increase utility of workers' efforts via intensification of work, democratisation of insecurity at work and weakening collective employee rights, thereby creating numerical and functional flexibility

in the labour market for employers' advantage (Brown et al., 2003; Burchell, Ladipo, & Wilkinson, 2002; Green, 2004) . Work has generally intensified in the UK since the 1980s. Green (2006) calls this the 'effort-biased' technological change, as opposed to a 'skill-biased' change as argued by the proponents of the 'upskilling' thesis. Work intensification has been more prominent in high and intermediate skilled jobs (Burchell, 2002). Particularly for the latter, this suggests a poor quality employment as high job demands and low job control are associated with higher mental strain on the job (Karasek, 1979; Van Yperen & Hagedoorn, 2003).

Job security

The high skills vision in the UK has replaced the notion of 'job for life' with 'employability for life' (DfES, 2003a), hence undermining the significance of job security for employee well-being. The trend with respect to job security in the UK has been in a negative direction across occupations. Although employees in higher level occupations make more use of a range of work skills and enjoy greater task discretion, they also feel significantly less secure in their jobs compared to three decades ago (Burchell, 2002). There is no clear evidence with respect to graduates' job security, however. Despite the rhetoric about the demise of the traditional career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), evidence from large graduate employers in the UK suggests that the traditional career is still very much alive (Sturges, Guest, & Davey, 2000). It is expected that those in traditional graduate occupations have greater perceived job security than those

in emerging and non-graduate occupations, as it is in the 'ordinary' character of these occupations to offer organisational careers.

Relations with management

Alongside these changes, collective employee rights have also declined. Non-union based employee voice has been increasing while union and dual (both union and employer based) voice has been declining since the 1980s (Gomez, Bryson, Kretschmer, & Willman, 2009). Even though no significant differences were reported with respect to occupational categories, it is expected that high skilled occupations enjoy better relations with management in comparison to intermediate and low skilled occupations. For instance, given the importance of individual employee rights today, Rousseau and colleagues (e.g., Hornung, Rousseau, & Glaser, 2008; Rousseau, Ho, & Greenberg, 2006; Severin, Rousseau, & Jürgen, 2009) argue for the existence of idiosyncratic deals (i-deals), that are "special conditions that individual workers have bargained for, and that differ to some extent from the standards applying to peers" (Severin et al., 2009, p. 739). It is the employees in higher skilled positions who are more motivated and have higher bargaining power in negotiating with employers (Ng & Feldman, 2010), which demonstrates better relations with management.

Chapter conclusions

With the aim of understanding the occupational boundaries within which graduate careers are shaped, this chapter reviewed the evidence on the availability and quality of graduate occupations in the UK. To this end, it placed graduate underemployment within the broader labour market in relation to the

debates on 'upskilling' and job polarisation. This revealed that today graduates are commonly used to compensate for the shortage of skills in 'emerging' graduate occupations.

This literature review suggested that growth of employment in higher skilled occupations in the UK appears to lag behind policy expectations. Moreover, based on the differences in job quality across these occupations, for graduates, employment in 'emerging' occupations is likely to be of inferior quality in comparison to that in traditional occupations. Hence, graduate underemployment may not be limited to working in non-graduate low skilled, low paid occupations but also extend to intermediate occupations. This suggests little evidence of 'upskilling' in 'emerging' graduate occupations to absorb the university qualified workforce. It appears that rather than contributing to economic prosperity, skills policies have contributed to segmentation within the graduate labour market where 'emerging' graduate occupations form a grey area between low skilled non-graduate and high skilled traditional graduate occupations. This is also contradictory to the limitless opportunities assumptions of the 'new' career discourse. This chapter identifies a major gap in the literature by pointing attention to the case of 'emerging' occupations, which are readily accepted by many as 'graduate' level, adequate employment. It highlights a necessity for systematic empirical analysis of the occupational boundaries of the GLM from multiple perspectives. This not only contributes to the 'upskilling' debate in relation to the developments in the labour market, but also provides valuable insight into understanding what job quality means for

the highly skilled workforce in future endeavours of 'upskilling' by employers and the UK skills policy. In understanding contemporary graduate careers, this contributes to the 'new' career research and may help explain new career patterns that are observed amongst this highly skilled workforce.

Based on the evidence in this chapter and the previous, it is rather appealing to take a social deterministic stance and argue that graduates' career mobility will be limited both in securing the first job upon graduation and afterwards due to lack of availability of jobs, quality of available occupations and differential access based on social and educational background. Chapter Four next examines the literature on career mobility in general and in particular job transitions following underemployment, taking into consideration the diversity identified on both the individual (i.e., employability) and the structural (i.e., occupational boundaries of the GLM) components of career mobility in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, respectively.

Chapter Four

4. GRADUATE CAREER MOBILITY

Introduction

Skills policies in the UK foresee that “the benefits of higher education for individuals are far-reaching” (DfES, 2003b, p. 4). This assumes that with widening participation in HE, individuals’ opportunities to exploit the fruits of their talents would be greater than ever today. The focus here, however, is more on social harmony than individual development (Jones & Thomas, 2005) and there is scant further attention on implications for the individual. From an individual perspective, the ‘new’ career discourse promotes the view that the possibilities in the labour market are virtually limitless and navigated by self-directedness. Within this context, the problem of graduate underemployment is taken to be a temporary phenomenon, as the great majority who start in low skilled non-graduate work demonstrate upward mobility within three to five years of employment (Purcell, Wilton, & Elias, 2006). Nevertheless, the limited availability of high skilled traditional graduate occupations, as discussed in Chapter Three, suggests movement out of low skilled work may not necessarily indicate movement out of underemployment for some graduates. Moreover, Chapter Two has argued that even though there is great emphasis on individual responsibility in securing employment by both skills policies and the ‘new’

career literature, there is likely to be considerable variability amongst graduates' development of employability not only due to differences in graduates' self-directedness but also due to social and educational constraints. This gives us reason to expect a similar variability in graduates' career patterns (Arnold, 1997b; Arnold & Jackson, 1997), particularly with respect to underemployment in the first job and movement out of low skilled non-graduate work. The great majority of research on graduate employment concentrates on graduate preferences and job- and organisation-related attitudes in relation to early underemployment. Despite being treated as a transitional phase in graduate careers, underemployment has received scant attention from a job transition perspective. How graduates enter into and move out of underemployment and how this experience effects later career progression and success is under-researched. Nevertheless, a wage penalty throughout careers for those who cannot progress out of poor quality jobs has been reported (Leuven & Oosterbeek, 2011). Moreover, new evidence suggests the persistence of underemployment (e.g., Mosca & Wright, 2011) and the need to examine new career patterns (e.g., Baruch & Bozionelos, 2010).

One realisation with the increasing diversity of career patterns and experiences was that career can be defined in both objective and subjective terms (Khapova, Arthur, & Wilderom, 2007; Schein, 1984). Subjective career refers to "the sense that individuals make of their careers, their personal histories, and the skills, attitudes and beliefs that they have acquired" (Arnold & Jackson, 1997, p. 429). Hence, mobility and success no longer connote upward transitions/promotions

to jobs that provide more responsibility and earnings. Nicholson & West (1988) identified 12 types of mobility based on status (upwards, lateral & downwards); function (same or changed); and employer (internal & external). Mobility based on status and/or function is of particular interest to this research as it concerns graduates' movement into and out of underemployment.

With the overall objective of understanding contemporary graduate careers, this chapter first reviews the literature on career mobility from the 'new' career and constraint-friendly perspectives. The latter allows incorporating not only the predictions of the former but also different strands of research that have not necessarily been in communication with each other, e.g., vocational psychology, economics and job design theories. Bringing these different strands of research, it then considers the evidence on graduates' entry into and movement out of underemployment. The chapter concludes with a summary and discussion of the literature with regards graduate career mobility.

Career mobility from a 'new' career perspective

Career mobility from a 'new' career perspective focuses on the demise of the traditional 'organisational' career within a single firm as a sequence of different positions. Arthur and Rousseau (1996) offer six different meanings of the boundaryless career as one that: (1) moves across boundaries of separate employers; (2) draws validation and marketability from outside the present employer; (3) is sustained by external networks or information; (4) breaks traditional organisational assumptions about hierarchy and career advancement; (5) involves an individual rejecting existing career opportunities

for personal or family reasons; and (6) based on the interpretation of the career actor, who may perceive a boundaryless career regardless of structural constraints. It is evident from this description that the 'new' career perspective places great emphasis on individual proactivity and self-directedness in job transitions. This is most pronounced in the definition of a protean career, where mobility is considered in light of the individual's values and self-direction (Briscoe & Hall, 2006).

The rationale behind the 'new' career research's emphasis on boundarylessness of opportunities and self-directedness of job transitions is rooted in knowledge workers' patterns of career development. Research has demonstrated that knowledge workers are highly mobile as they create market niches using the esoteric nature of their knowledge (Donnelly, 2009; Tam et al., 2002) in organisations that offer challenge and development opportunities (Holland, Hecker, & Steen, 2002). Based on this evidence, career success, within this discourse, is held synonymous with mobility and is argued to be related to three important career competencies on the side of the individual, which correspond very closely to the discussion of employability presented in Chapter Two: *know-why*, *know-how* and *know-whom* (De Fillippi & Arthur, 1994). *Know-why* refers to an individual's career motivation, personal meaning and identification and is similar to self-awareness as discussed in relation to employability. *Know-how* concerns an individual's career-related knowledge and skills that accumulate over time and may be likened to human capital component of employability. Finally, *know-whom* refers to the career-related networks an individual has and

is, therefore, similar to the notion of social capital. Research has provided support for the importance of these competencies, in particular *know-why*, via career self-management in predicting mobility and career success, in highly skilled samples (Colakoglu, 2011; De Vos et al., 2011; De Vos & Soens, 2008; Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003).

At least two major short-comings of the 'new' career discourse can be identified in understanding contemporary graduate careers in the UK context. Firstly, its emphasis on individual agency in career mobility and success is largely based on a knowledge economy thesis, which, as noted in Chapter Three, assumes boundarylessness of opportunities in the labour market. For instance, Khapova, Arthur and Wilderom (2007) argue that "in the knowledge economy, in which many of the walls that limited the movement and reach of people are dissolving, people have more power to influence both markets and nation-states than at any time in history" (p. 114). Nevertheless, the great majority of this research, at least at the conceptual level, originates from the corporate US context (D. Thomas & Inkson, 2007) and is highly criticised by the European researchers for neglecting the role of institutional constraints on career mobility (Arnold & Cohen, 2008; Forrier et al., 2009; Inkson et al., 2012; Roper, Ganesh, & Inkson, 2010). Inkson and King (2011), for instance, argue that careers "result from deals negotiated between individual career actors and the organizations in which they work over their working lives" (p. 37). This implies that an individual's negotiating power (e.g., human and social capital) and opportunities organisations offer act in concert in career mobility and success.

In fact, contrary to the sole focus on career self-management and employability by the 'new' career discourse, career mobility is found to be largely determined by a combination of: structural labour market factors (e.g., macroeconomic conditions); occupational labour market factors (e.g., wage levels); organisational policies and procedures (e.g., staffing policies); work group-level factors (e.g., social support); personal life factors (e.g., resolving work-life conflict); and personality and personal style differences (e.g., locus of control) (Feldman & Ng, 2007).

A second short-coming of the 'new' career discourse in contributing to our understanding of contemporary graduate careers is that the concept of boundarylessness is rooted in knowledge workers' patterns of career development and may not necessarily reflect the reality for those who work in lower skilled jobs (Bukodi & Dex, 2010; Inkson et al., 2008), particularly for graduates who start in underemployment. There is now a plethora of research on job quality and career prospects at the lower end of the labour market which suggests that career opportunities are generally 'bounded' (Dutton et al., 2008; Grimshaw & Carroll, 2008; Grimshaw, Lloyd, & Warhurst, 2008). For instance, Toyne (2003) in her book on low pay Britain has demonstrated that mobility for lower skilled workers was associated with the short-term contracts offered and, therefore, most had to move on/out upon completion of their contracts, often gaining little or no knowledge, skills and social capital to help find a better job. Career development for these workers in low skilled work may resemble the rhetoric on boundaryless careers in that they frequently change employers

and jobs, yet this does not necessarily indicate that they have a 'boundaryless mindset'. It is argued that most employees do not choose or define their careers in traditional or 'new' career terms but that it is imposed upon them by the organisations they work for, e.g., via temporary contracts (Raider & Burt, 1996). Hence, some employees may be pushed into involuntary boundarylessness due to the structure of organisations and/or labour market (Pang, 2003) either due to lack of availability of alternatives and/or opportunities to enhance employability. Despite the increasing density, however, there is a scarcity of research on career mobility and success for higher skilled workers in low and intermediate segments of the labour market.

In light of the discussion of the availability and quality of today's graduate occupations in the UK presented in Chapter Three, the two short-comings associated with the 'new' career in contributing to our understanding of the contemporary graduate careers (i.e., its neglect structural factors affecting career mobility and its focus on workers in high-skilled work) calls for a more constraint-friendly approach, which is discussed next.

Career mobility from a constraint-friendly perspective

It has been pointed out that the concept of boundarylessness need to be differentiated as an attribute of the individual (i.e., individual plasticity) and of the environment (i.e., labour market permeability) (Feldman & Ng, 2007). The former refers to an individual's mindset and behaviour of job, organisation and occupational change, while the latter corresponds to the structure of the labour markets, availability of jobs, organisations and occupations and the ease of

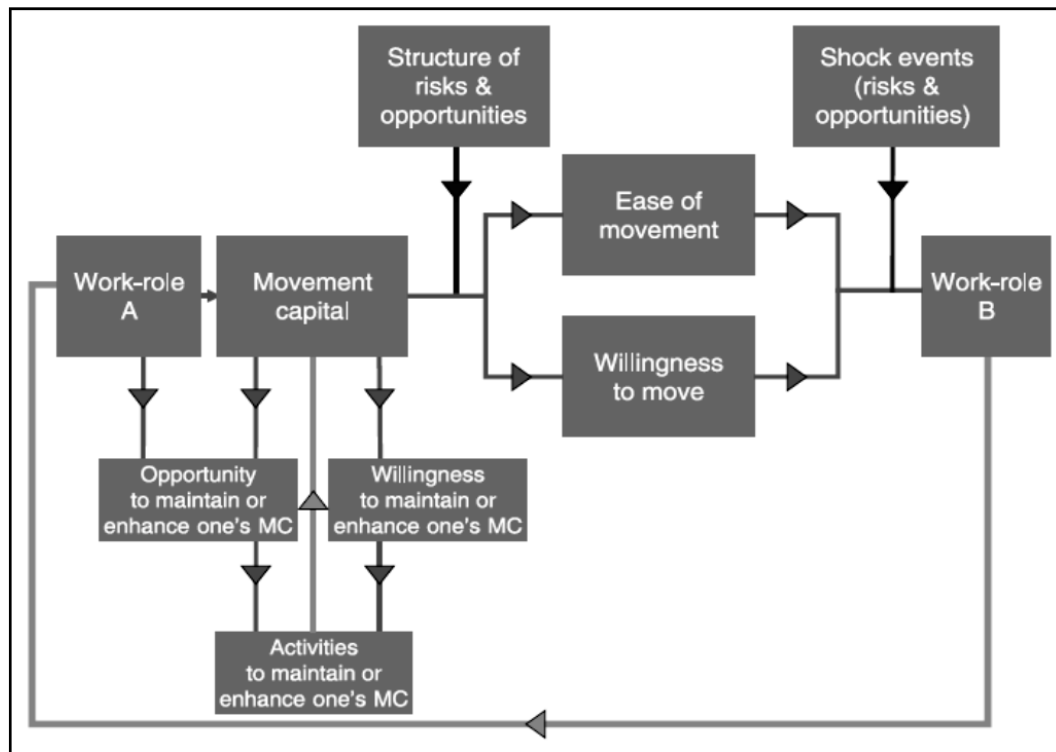
entry into them (Feldman & Ng, 2007). Along these lines, European thinking on careers commonly considers the influence of different institutional and organisational contexts on career development, as well as acknowledging the role of individual proactivity and responsibility (e.g., Claes & Quintanilla, 1994; Khapova, Vinkenbug, & Arnold, 2009; Mayrhofer, Meyer, & Steyrer, 2007; Mayrhofer & Schneidhofer, 2009; Van der Heijden, Schalk, & Van Veldhoven, 2008).

Based on a need to incorporate some of the structural constraints (e.g., availability and quality of alternatives in the labour market) that influence career mobility and development, Forrier et al., (2009) developed a conceptual model of career mobility with implications for career success. This model (see Figure 4.1), while still taking a boundaryless and protean perspective to careers, allows to study some of the structural opportunities and barriers that affect how an individual's career self-management, employability and job transitions are realised. Largely based on turnover and self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000) literatures, this model takes movement capital⁶ (employability) and the structure of risks and opportunities as the individual and structural components of mobility, respectively. It proposes that transitions are not solely dependent on an individual's employability and willingness to move, as argued by the 'new' career discourse, but that

⁶ Due to the obscurity in conceptualisation of employability and being based on the turnover literature, this model uses the term 'movement capital' rather than employability. However, movement capital as it is included in the model includes the four main dimensions of employability discussed in Chapter Two (i.e., human capital, social capital, self-awareness and adaptability). Therefore, the remainder of this thesis will refer to 'employability' rather than 'movement capital' to keep consistency with the literature.

employability determines willingness *and* perceived ease of movement depending on the structure of opportunities. Hence, it suggests that it is an individual's willingness *and* ability within the structural constraints (e.g., actual availability of alternatives) that determine movements within organisations and the labour market. Moreover, complementing the argument in Chapter Two that employability may not be as self-directed as argued to be by the 'new' career discourse, it proposes that enhancing employability is influenced by both the opportunities that are afforded to an individual *and* one's willingness to do so.

Figure 4.1 Forrier et al.'s (2009) conceptual model of career mobility



The first component where employability is proposed to influence job transitions depending on the structure of opportunities in the labour market in this model is an individual's willingness to move. This refers to desirability of

movement in turnover models (March & Simon, 1958), which suggest that individuals will be reluctant to move if the sacrifices made by changing jobs are greater than the benefits offered by the transition (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erez, 2001). The SDT perspective, similarly, predicts that individuals will be more willing to move when the perceived alternatives are aligned with career goals and motives (Forrier et al., 2009; Gesthuizen & Dagevos, 2008). Schein (1974, 1996), for instance, argues that individuals' interests, needs, abilities and values will form the career anchors based on which individuals will consider various mobility options. Hence, according to this conceptual model, employability translates into willingness to move if the opportunities within the internal/external labour market are favourable for the individual (e.g., in terms of what the job/organisation offers and also how these match with the individual's personal and/or career-related preferences).

The second component where employability is proposed to influence job transitions depending on the structure of opportunities in the labour market in this model is an individual's perceived ease of movement, referring to the "perception of available work-role alternatives" (Forrier et al., 2009, p. 747). Turnover models highlight that it is not only willingness to move but also the ability to move that predict transitions (March & Simon, 1958). This indicates that mobility is related to actual availability of alternatives, the individual's awareness of these and whether or not one qualifies for these alternatives (Trevor, 2001). From a SDT perspective, perceived ease of movement refers to the degree of control one has over the desired transition and the extent to

which the individual perceives herself as competent in doing so. It is argued that individuals will engage in behaviours which they perceive they can successfully perform (Bandura, 1977). Ease of movement has been shown to be related to turnover intentions (Griffeth, Steel, Allen, & Bryan, 2005). This is argued to be, in part, rooted in the commonplace job insecurity in today's workplaces, such that employees who cannot trust their employer for employment security and who believe they can easily find a similar or better job are more likely to change jobs (De Cuyper, Bernhard-Oettel, Berntson, De Witte, & Alarco, 2008; De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011).

This model of career mobility also acknowledges a role for 'shock events', defined as "very distinguishable events which lead an individual to make judgments about remaining or leaving their current labour market position" (Forrier et al., 2009, p. 750). These are not necessarily job- and/or organisation-related but are often events outside of work life (e.g., marriage) (Lee & Mitchell, 1984; Lee, Mitchell, McDaniel, & Hill, 1999; Lee, Mitchell, Wise, & Fireman, 1996). In fact, Krumboltz (1998) argues that not all career decision making is planned and that individuals use these unplanned events to their favour in career development (Mitchell, Levin & Krumboltz, 1999).

Despite figuratively suggesting a forward feedback loop with transition from Job A to Job B, it is implicit in this model that not all transitions are successful for the individual, for instance, depending on the opportunities provided by the new work role for enhancing and maintaining employability (Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005; Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001), the voluntariness of this

transition (Eby & Buch, 1995; Zikic & Richardson, 2007) and/or the extent to which this leads the individual to reassess career goals and develop career insight, thereby enhancing adaptability (Bosley, Arnold, & Cohen, 2009; Hassan, 2007).

Current theorising on career mobility and success, at least in Europe, is increasingly moving away from the voluntarism of the 'new' career discourse to understanding when and how employability leads to job transitions within the structural constraints of labour markets. Examining work histories and career mobility of graduates' of 1980, Dolton and Makepeace (1992) concluded that "there is little career mobility to explain" (p. 92). Considering the diversity in the GLM in graduate occupations and workforce today, the implication for the present research is that there is likely to be considerable variation in graduates' career mobility. This is already visible in the university-to-work transitions, with a substantial proportion of graduates finding work in traditionally non-graduate occupations. By definition it is rather difficult to predict the shock events that influence mobility, nevertheless, the literature on graduate experiences provides us with some indication as to graduates' willingness and perceived ease of movement in relation to career mobility. This chapter next examines the literature on career mobility in securing the first job and later following early underemployment.

University-to-work transitions

It was noted in Chapter Two that by developing an understanding of one's knowledge, skills, abilities, interests and preferences, and the opportunities and

boundaries in the labour market, individuals who engage in employability enhancing activities, i.e., CSM, are more likely to clearly articulate career goals and identify effective strategies in achieving these goals (De Vos, Dewettinck, & Buyens, 2009). Hence, CSM may play a pivotal role in early employment outcomes for graduates, especially in identifying alternatives in the GLM. Difficulty in identifying alternatives and developing strategies to secure these, in turn, may render willingness and ease of movement from university onto high skilled work rather difficult and likely to result in underemployment in the first job.

Research on university-to-work transitions suggests that the great majority of graduates experience uncertainty and stress upon graduation (Graham & McKenzie, 1995), as they question the role of their education in relation to the opportunities in the labour market (Buckham, 1998; Lairio & Penttinen, 2006) and were likely to procrastinate with regards to career decision making upon graduation (Perrone & Vickers, 2003). This experience largely corresponds to the definition of career indecision in vocational psychology, referring to when the individual experiences difficulty formulating and pursuing career goals, the result of which is commonly in rushing to a decision (hypervigilance), procrastination or avoiding any decision making (Callanan & Greenhaus, 1992; Feldman, 2003).

For young adults career decision making happens at a time when they make decisions about the most important things in life while not having much experience in doing so (Feldman, 2003). During the early 'learning' stages of

career, individuals may be more concerned with behaviours and norms in relation to jobs and organisations and less so about career goals (Noe, Noe, & Bachhuber, 1990). This corresponds to an understanding of ‘employability for what?’ and, hence, career identity. It can be argued, therefore, that not being able to develop career identity (or self-awareness; ‘who am I?’ ‘who do I want to be?’) may impact graduates’ willingness to move to high skilled work from university, as reflected in career indecision, as this concerns alignment of career goals with the opportunities in the GLM.

Some argue that career indecision may actually have a positive impact on careers (Krumboltz, 1992, 1998; Mitchell et al., 1999) , while it is also demonstrated that undecided individuals become more indifferent to job hunting activities (Betz & Voyten, 1997; Greenhaus, Callanan, & Kaplan, 1995). In turn, poor job search activities have been associated with loss of earnings, underemployment and poorer attitudes towards the first job (Feldman, 1996; Feldman & Turnley, 1995; Saks & Ashforth, 2000; Werbel, 2000). Job search and networking have been demonstrated to be related to employment outcomes (e.g., speed of finding employment, initial salary and attitudes towards jobs and organisations) and overcoming barriers in employment (Ellis & Taylor, 1983; Kanfer & Hulin, 1985; Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001; Koen et al., 2012; Moynihan, Roehling, LePine, & Boswell, 2003; Saks & Ashforth, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2002; Wanberg, Glomb, Song, & Sorenson, 2005; Werbel, 2000) for diverse samples including university graduates and the unemployed. Moreover, in relating these findings to how structural constraints affect individuals’

behaviour in the labour market, Feldman (2003) proposes that career indecision will have less of an effect on individuals' immediate career outcomes when the demand for labour is high. Given what we know of the limited availability of high skilled jobs and differential job quality in the UK GLM from Chapter Three, it is likely that these consequences will be heightened, rather than lessened, for those who experience career indecision, resulting in increased likelihood of underemployment in the first job.

These findings on employment outcomes are commonly explained within a person-job (P-J) fit framework which suggests that the congruence between the individual's knowledge, skills and preferences, and job characteristics will lead to positive employment-related outcomes. There are, nevertheless, two major reservations that need to be taken into account when interpreting these findings in relation to graduate underemployment. The first concerns the measurement of employment outcomes. Two proxies have been commonly used to determine the effect of CSM: number of job offers/employment status (employed/unemployed) and employment quality. Kanfer et al., (2001), in their meta-analysis reported a modest relationship (.24) between job search and employment status. Employment status is likely to be a less meaningful indicator when applied to the GLM. As discussed in Chapter Three, the issue with regards to graduate employment is concerned with the quality of employment rather than unemployment, although there is evidence to suggest this trend is changing in the UK with the 2008 economic recession (Osborne, 2012).

Measurement of employment quality in this stream of research, however, is also limited, mainly taking initial salary and/or job and organisational attitudes as indicators. Understanding quality of employment requires taking into account multiple job characteristics, most important of which are the intrinsic features of the job, as indicated by job design theories (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Oldham & Hackman, 2010). In an effort to appropriate this measurement issue, Moynihan et al., (2003), for instance, used whether the job offer/employment was from a desirable organisation. Hence, even though the evidence appears theoretically and statistically plausible, interpretation of these findings needs some caution.

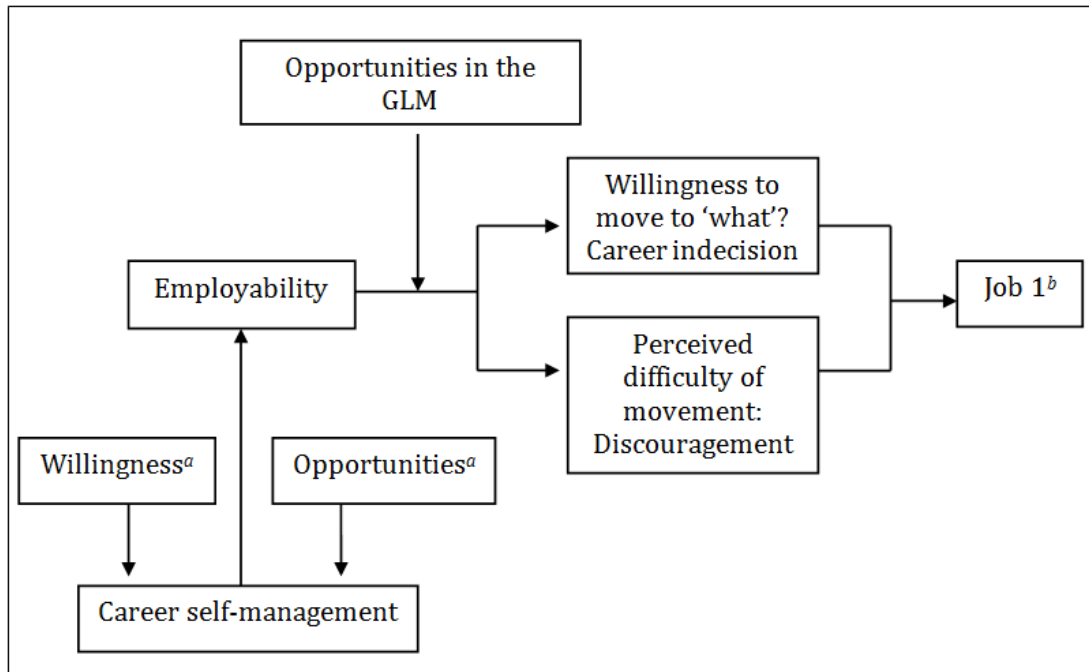
The second reservation with regards to the findings on employment outcomes concerns the nature of 'fit'. Based on the evidence offered in Chapter Three with regards to possible differences between graduate occupations and the limited availability of traditional graduate occupations, it is likely that despite extensive job search and networking some graduates will be underemployed in traditionally non-graduate occupations. Hence, not all CSM activities may result in securing high skilled work. This brings the discussion to graduates' possible discouragement from the graduate labour market based on perceived ease of movement either due to lack of progress (Thomas & Tymon, 1993) in securing graduate employment despite engaging in CSM or due to a lack of CSM; as Gunz (1989) noted structural constraints in the labour market may lead some to be discouraged.

The discouraged worker hypothesis states that poor labour market expectations, in terms of lower likelihood of finding a suitable job due to lack of qualifications to secure desired jobs and availability of these jobs, may discourage individuals in their job search (Van Ham, Mulder, & Hooimeijer, 2001). This hypothesis has generally been applied to the unemployed or to those who choose to be economically inactive (Jensen & Slack, 2003; Van Ham & Büchel, 2006). However, given the evidence with regards to employers using qualifications as a screening device (Mason, 2002; Purcell et al., 2002), the fierce competition (Brown, 2003) and uncertainty in the contemporary labour market (Blustein et al., 2002) some graduates may be discouraged either as a result of lack of progress despite CSM; by the amount of time and effort that goes into applying for and securing 'graduate' jobs; and/or due to a perception that these jobs are not available to them and may succumb to lower skilled but easier entry jobs (McKeown & Lindorff, 2011). Hence, from a SDT perspective, some graduates may perceive a lack of competence in securing high skilled work, resulting in a perceived difficulty of movement and, hence, employment in lower skilled work.

The constraint-friendly model of career mobility developed by Forrier et al. (2009) allows incorporating these different strands of research on career indecision and the discouraged worker effect into one parsimonious framework. Based on this discussion, it can be argued that when the availability of traditional graduate level work is limited, some graduates may be more likely to be underemployed in the first job because they may (i) experience career

indecision due to lack of willingness and/or opportunities to enhance employability via CSM and/or (ii) become discouraged from the GLM due to perceived difficulty in moving on to high skilled work regardless of the extent to which they engaged in CSM (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 Conceptual model of university-to-work transitions that result in underemployment



Note. ^a Willingness and opportunities to enhance employability are concepts borrowed from the discussion of employability in Chapter Three and refer to self-directedness of employability (willingness) and social and educational constraints (opportunities).

^b Job 1 represents underemployment.

Career mobility following early underemployment

Graduate underemployment has been treated as a temporary phenomenon in graduate careers (Elias & Purcell, 2004a). This is mainly based on the overall income data suggesting a degree premium for graduates and the majority of graduates moving out of non-graduate jobs within three to five years of employment (Elias & Purcell, 2009; Kitchen et al., 2008; O'Leary & Sloane,

2005). The review of the literature in Chapter Three, however, gives us reason to question the validity of this conclusion on temporality of graduate underemployment. Firstly, it was shown that there is a scarcity of research examining the extent to which 'emerging' graduate occupations graduates commonly move on to are 'graduatised'. Secondly, there is now a plethora of research demonstrating a polarisation of wages based on social and educational background. Not surprisingly then, a wage penalty throughout careers, especially for those who perceive they are over-educated in early jobs, has been reported repeatedly (Battu et al., 1999; Korpi & Tåhlin, 2009a). Moreover, evidence examining graduate destinations suggests persistence of underemployment, at least in early careers for UK graduates (Dolton & Vignoles, 2000; Mosca & Wright, 2011). Feldman (1996) proposed, in his seminal work, that underemployment and career outcomes are closely related. McKee-Ryan et al., (2011) in their later update to Feldman's work, have suggested that this is possibly a negative link because career trajectories of the underemployed would be 'dampened' by this experience. Hence, it is likely that early underemployment has spill-over effects on graduates' later career progression and success (Nabi, 2003; Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2011). Yet, this remains an under-researched area. In order to conceptually analyse career mobility for graduates following early underemployment, this section brings together separate yet related strands of research from the organisational psychology literature on attitudinal consequences of underemployment and the economics perspectives on career mobility which utilise human capital development and the role of structural boundaries in their predictions. Overall,

these perspectives comprise the major components in the Forrier et al. (2009) conceptual model: employability, structure of opportunities, willingness and perceived ease of movement, and hence, can be incorporated into this model.

Looking at how the individual experiences underemployment and how this may relate to career mobility we can refer to job design theories and the increasing research on attitudinal consequences of underemployment. Job design theories have long argued that job characteristics are the vehicle through which employment-related outcomes are realised (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Hackman, Oldham, Janson, & Purdy, 1975; Karasek, 1979; Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Oldham & Hackman, 2010). Rather than explicitly focusing on human capital development, however, these theories stress the importance of work characteristics such as skill variety, autonomy and social support in contributing to an individual's not only work motivation and performance but also to work-related attitudes, well-being and turnover intentions. These relationships are also supported by the research on job quality (e.g., Batt, Hunter, & Wilk, 2002; Burgess & Connell, 2008; Kalleberg & Vaisey, 2005). The comprehensive focus of the job design theories on various aspects of jobs may better approximate employability development opportunities, as for instance, experienced meaningfulness at work (e.g., via task significance) may contribute to an individual's career identity (who I am? and who I want to be?) or challenging tasks may strengthen adaptability to changing work and organisational circumstances.

Within the organisational psychology domain, it is also argued that job quality acts both as an objective and subjective indicator of underemployment (Feldman, 2006; McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011) highlighting the role of volition, expectations and preferences in job and career choice (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2007; Holtom, Lee, & Tidd, 2002; Maynard & Joseph, 2008; Maynard, Thorsteinson, & Parfyonova, 2006) in relation to employment-related outcomes. Three main theoretical explanations are offered to account for perceived underemployment and its employment-related correlates: person-job fit (P-J fit), relative deprivation, and equity theory.

Maynard and colleagues (Maynard, Joseph, & Maynard, 2006; Maynard, Taylor, & Hakel, 2009) studied perceived underemployment from a P-J fit framework and concluded that underemployment (P-J misfit) is associated with job attitudes and turnover intentions. Feldman and colleagues (Feldman, Leana, & Bolino, 2002; Feldman, Leana, & Turnley, 1997; Feldman & Turnley, 2004) took a relative deprivation approach to underemployment, referring to “(i) wanting some outcome; (ii) feeling deserving that outcome; (iii) not receiving that outcome; and (iv) perceiving that some comparative other receives the desired outcome or more of the desired outcomes” (Crosby, 1976, p. 46). The degree of relative deprivation depends on the discrepancy between the received and expected/desired outcomes; similarity of the comparative other to the individual; the individual’s attribution style; and the individual’s sense of entitlement to outcomes (Feldman et al., 1997). Their findings have demonstrated that attitudes exacerbate when employees compare their

predicament with similar others (e.g., in terms of experience and/or qualifications) in better jobs (Feldman et al., 2002; Feldman & Turnley, 2004). Adams' (1965) equity theory, similarly, proposes that employees will compare their inputs (e.g., knowledge, skills and abilities) and outputs (e.g., skill use, discretion and wages), and form fairness judgments on this basis. Perception of inequity between one's inputs/outputs compared to similar others' is predicted to result in negative attitudes on the side of the employee and has generally found support in the literature (Erdogan, Bauer, Peiro, & Truxillo, 2011; Kulik & Ambrose, 1992).

These different theoretical perspectives on the consequences of underemployment suggest that experience of underemployment is negatively associated with work-related attitudes and positively with turnover intentions. Moreover, opportunities afforded to others (within the occupational boundaries of the labour market) as observed by the individual are predicted to trigger feelings of inequity and relative deprivation on the side of the individual. Feelings of inequity may increase one's willingness to move while relative deprivation may provide a perceived ease of movement for the individual out of underemployment. Hence, these perspectives on perceived underemployment suggest lack of opportunities provided by the job/organisation will translate into negative attitudes, particularly if the individual is able to observe better alternatives occupied by similar others, as suggested by the relative deprivation and perceived inequity approaches.

The organisational psychology research on the consequences of underemployment fails to explain how individuals actually move out of underemployment and the quality of these transitions. Conceptually complementing this research, the economics perspective offers two contradictory and rather deterministic predictions with regards to the effects of underemployment on career mobility: (i) underemployment acts as a stepping stone to better jobs and (ii) it results in entrapment in low skilled work. The stepping stone view of underemployment, based on the theory of career mobility (Sicherman, 1991; Sicherman & Galor, 1990), suggests that non-optimal entry into the labour market enhances opportunities for career progression. This is based on the assumption that workers who are overqualified/overskilled will outperform adequately employed colleagues and, therefore, will be more likely to be promoted (Sicherman & Galor, 1990). Steijn, Need, and Gesthuizen (2006) also stress the importance of experience gained on the job in moving out of underemployment. Hence, according to this perspective, underemployment may actually enhance an individual's employability via human capital development, in comparison to lower skilled colleagues and/or the unemployed. In support of this, prior research suggests that compared to the unemployed, those starting in non-standard employment are more likely to be upwardly mobile (Steijn et al., 2006). This is also supported by findings such as about one thirds of individuals holding low-wage jobs moving on to higher wage jobs eventually (Bolvig, 2005) and fixed-term contracts, in most cases, acting as stepping stones to permanent jobs (Booth, Francesconi, & Frank, 2002). This perspective, however, treats mobility as

directly related to human capital. Moreover, with regard to graduates' movement out of underemployment, the assumption that the overqualified will outperform may be questionable as it has been demonstrated that graduate underemployment commonly results in negative attitudes toward the job and the organisation, which, in turn, negatively affects productivity (Nabi, 2003).

Contrary to the stepping stone view, the entrapment hypothesis predicts that individuals will suffer negative career consequences due to entrapment in poor quality jobs (Scherer, 2004). This view is also in line with Doeringer and Piore's (1971) theory of dual labour markets, according to which there will be limited mobility between the primary (high skilled) and the secondary (low skilled) segments of the labour market. One explanation for this entrapment in poor quality jobs is implicit in Spence's (1973) labour market signalling theory that work experience and credentials signal competency information to employers and that poor early labour market experience is likely to signal incompetency to recruiters. In fact, Scherer (2004) argues that this forms a stigma on the individual. It has been demonstrated that for many underemployed, careers and access to jobs appear to be 'bounded' by this stigma of prior employment history (King et al., 2005). Moreover, in comparison to adequately employed individuals, the underemployed are commonly offered fewer development opportunities (Büchel & Mertens, 2004). Hence, experience of lower skilled jobs may inhibit career progression via cumulative disadvantage (DiPrete & Eirich, 2006), referring to when previous attainments influence future attainment of development, income or opportunities. Overqualified individuals, even though

demonstrating greater chances of mobility (Alba-Ramírez & Blázquez, 2003), suffer from the disadvantages due to early underemployment in later career as this mobility does not necessarily entail an upward movement to high skilled jobs (McGuinness & Wooden, 2009).

In comparison to the stepping stone view, the entrapment hypothesis of career mobility following underemployment predicts fewer opportunities for enhancing employability for the individual and takes the structure of opportunities (reflected in availability of jobs and ease of entry into them) into account. Both perspectives have received some scholarly attention. The latter explanation, however, with its emphasis on both labour market segmentation and development through work appears to find more support. In particular, an upward mobility *within* the secondary segment of the labour market (comprising of both low and intermediate skilled occupations) was reported (Dekker, De Grip, & Heijke, 2002; Purcell, Flynn, & Na, 2010; Sander & De Grip, 2004), which may explain the findings that the great majority of graduates who start in low skilled work move on to intermediate skilled occupations within three to five years after graduation (Elias & Purcell, 2004a, 2009, 2011).

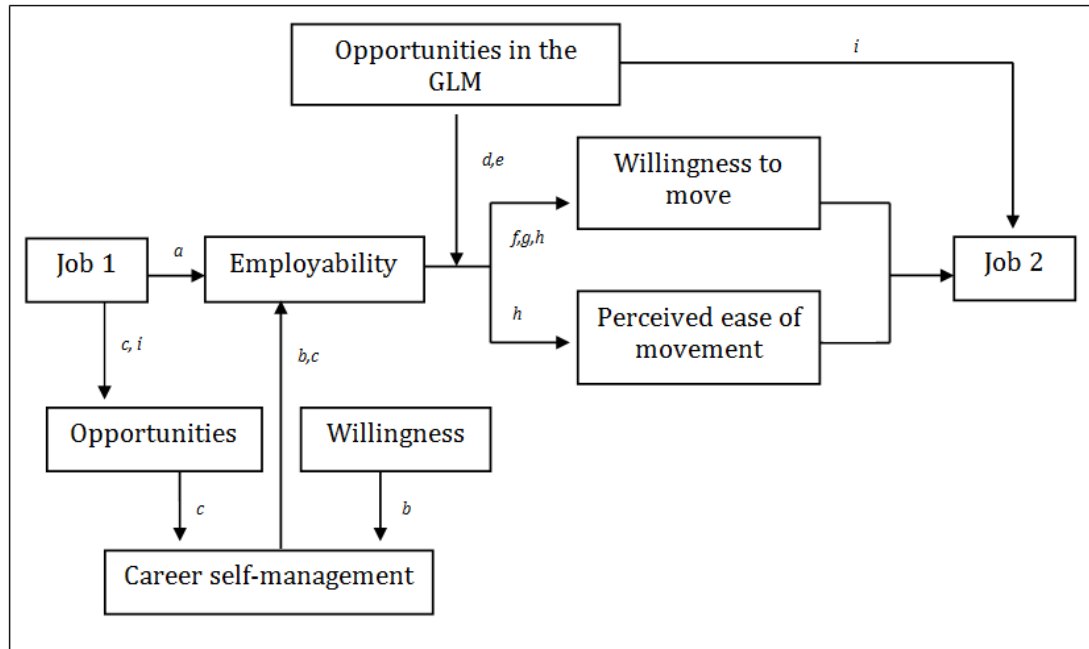
This review of graduate career mobility based its conceptual analysis on the Forrier et al. (2009) model which is largely based on the turnover and SDT literature. This provided a parsimonious framework that allows creating a conceptual bridge from the popular 'new' career research to some of the structural constraints that influence career mobility. In the particular case of graduates' transitions out of underemployment, it also, allows incorporating

different strands of research on underemployment and career mobility that are not necessarily in communication with each other (see Figure 4.3).

The stepping stone view of underemployment suggests that experience of the low skilled jobs will contribute to an individual's human capital in comparison to lower skilled colleagues and/or the unemployed and lead to faster transitions (path *a*). According to the vocational psychology and the 'new' career research employability development based on one's self-directed career self-management is the key to job transitions (path *b*). The job design perspective to underemployment, however, argues that development through work and employability is also determined by the opportunities provided by the job and the organisation (path *c*). Turnover literature (path *d*) and the SDT (path *e*) then predict that employability will lead to willingness to move and perceived ease of movement depending on the availability of alternatives in the labour market and ease of entry into them. Regardless of the nature of opportunities in the GLM, organisational research on consequences of underemployment suggests that underemployment will lead to negative attitudes toward the job and the organisation and a willingness to move out (path *f, g, and h*). In particular, it can be argued that the relative deprivation and perceived inequity perspectives to underemployment may indicate that the individual may feel more in control of the transition by observing similar others in better jobs and, hence, perceive an ease of movement (path *g,h*). Finally, the entrapment hypothesis on career mobility following underemployment suggests, regardless of the psychological mechanisms involved in the

experience of underemployment, mobility will be constrained within the lower segment of the labour market (path *i*).

Figure 4.3 Conceptual model of graduates' movement out of underemployment



Note. *a* stepping stone view of underemployment,
b the vocational psychology and the 'new' career perspective on employability,
c the job design theories,
d the turnover literature,
e the SDT perspective on career mobility,
f the P-J fit perspective to perceived underemployment,
g the perceived inequity perspective to perceived underemployment,
h the relative deprivation perspective to perceived underemployment,
i the entrapment hypothesis.

Chapter conclusions

In understanding graduates' career mobility there is a lack of research that takes the structural constraints (e.g., the availability of graduate occupations and ease of entry into them) that are gaining prominence in the European theorising. It is commonly taken for granted, in the optimistic predictions of the UK skills policy and the 'new' career discourse, that graduate underemployment

is a transitory period, despite evidence suggesting otherwise. Even though it has been treated as a 'transitory' phase, graduate underemployment is seldom explored from a job transition perspective. This chapter aimed to fill this gap by basing its conceptual analysis on the 'new' career and the constraint-friendly perspectives on career mobility and incorporating different and non-communicating strands of research into understanding graduates' entry into and movement out of underemployment.

The analysis in Chapter Two has suggested that, at least at the start of careers, graduate employability may be constrained by social and educational factors and, therefore, may not be as self-directed as argued to be. The review of the literature in this chapter has suggested that the variability in graduates' employability development and its relationship to early underemployment in the first job may be explained via the willingness and perceived ease of movement concepts in Forrier et al. (2009) framework, which are formed depending on the structure of opportunities in the labour market. Looking at this model from an entry into underemployment perspective, willingness and perceived ease of movement onto high skilled work are argued to be manifested in graduates' career indecision and discouragement from the GLM. Nevertheless, the evidence in this chapter largely draws from the vocational and psychology research which focus either on students' school-to-work transitions or the unemployed individuals' transition to work. In examining graduates' career mobility to understand contemporary graduate careers, this

chapter calls for an in-depth analysis of how graduate employability translates into underemployment in the first job.

It is argued in Chapter Three that the UK GLM is now more segmented to include traditionally non-graduate, 'emerging' occupations which are less likely to offer opportunities for employability advancement, in comparison to traditional graduate occupations. This suggests that, contrary to the predictions of the stepping stone view, experience of underemployment may not enhance employability and lead to better jobs. Moreover, job design theories suggest that employee development is closely related to the opportunities provided by the job/organisation, indicating that underemployment is unlikely to enhance graduate employability. Organisational research on attitudinal consequences of underemployment invariably predicts and provides evidence for the negative work-, organisation- and career-related outcomes associated with this experience, which suggests that graduates will be willing to move out of non-graduate occupations and, depending on the comparison category, develop a perceived ease of movement onto better jobs. Entrapment hypothesis, however, puts forth that mobility within the secondary segment of the labour market will be limited due to the nature of opportunities and lack of development through the job. Putting this evidence from different strands of research on employability, underemployment and career mobility together, it can be argued here that early underemployment will negatively affect graduate career mobility and that graduates' movement onto 'emerging' occupations within three to five years may represent upward mobility from the low skilled segment

of the GLM but not so in comparison to the high skilled, primary, segment. In contributing to this research's overarching aim of understanding contemporary graduate careers, this calls for an in-depth exploration of graduate career histories, which compares (i) early career histories of graduates who started their careers in underemployment (i.e., on the 'wrong-foot') with those who did not (i.e., on the 'right-foot') to understand graduates' entry into underemployment; (ii) later career histories of graduates who moved out of initial underemployment (i.e., started on the 'wrong-foot' but moved onto 'right-track') with those who did not (i.e., started on the 'wrong-foot' and got 'stuck') to understand graduates' movement out of underemployment; and (iii) overall career patterns of 'wrong-foot' graduates with 'right-foot' graduates, to understand the effects of early underemployment on later career mobility and outcomes.

Based on the conceptual analysis of the literature on graduate employability, the occupational structure of the GLM and career mobility, and the gaps identified in our knowledge of these research areas in contributing to an understanding of contemporary graduate careers, Chapter Five next develops a research framework.

Chapter Five

5. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Introduction

Geared towards a vision of a 'high skills, high wages', knowledge economy, the skills policies in the UK aim to achieve economic and social prosperity in part by rapidly expanding participation in HE. This places the responsibility for securing employment on the individual and predicts 'far reaching' outcomes for all parties involved, e.g., employers, HE institutions and graduates. Concurrently, the 'new' career literature assumes the existence of a knowledge economy where opportunities for individuals' career development are 'boundaryless' and based on self-directedness. This, in turn, predicts heightened mobility, treated synonymously with career success. Reports of increasing, and to some extent persistent, graduate underemployment in the UK imply that the assumptions and predictions of the skills policies and the 'new' career literature may have failed to materialise. On the back of this rationale, a review of the literature examining graduate employability (Chapter Two), the occupational boundaries of the GLM (Chapter Three) and career mobility (Chapter Four) was conducted with the overarching aim of understanding contemporary graduate careers. A number of gaps were identified in our current understanding. Chapter Two pointed to a need for study of graduate employability from a

process perspective, examining the role of CSM and its self-directedness in graduates' employability development at the start of graduate careers. Chapter Three calls for a systematic analysis of job quality in 'emerging' occupations in order to determine the occupational boundaries within which graduate careers are realised, thereby contributing to our understanding of the extent of 'upskilling' and pervasiveness of underemployment in the GLM. Finally, Chapter Four highlights a gap in our understanding of graduates' transitions into and out of underemployment and the spill-over effects of this experience in later career mobility and outcomes. Based on these gaps and to satisfy the three objectives of this research (i.e., (1) to examine the factors associated with enhancing graduate employability prior to securing the first job and the extent to which this reflects a self-directed process; (2) to examine the occupational boundaries within which graduate careers develop; (3) to explore graduates' entry into and movement out of early underemployment and the effects of this experience in later career mobility and outcomes) this chapter formulates hypotheses and propositions in relation to graduate employability, the occupational boundaries of the GLM and graduate career mobility starting with transition into underemployment extending up to 10 years post-graduation. More specifically, in examining graduate employability and the occupational boundaries of the GLM, a hypothetico-deductive approach was used and hypotheses were formulated based on previous research on the respective areas. However, in exploring career mobility and outcomes, which is an under-researched area in understanding contemporary graduate careers, an inductive approach was taken where different strands of relevant research were brought

together and, therefore, the relationships between variables of interest were formulated in more general terms, in propositions.

Determinants of graduate employability

Employability has been the focus of both skills policies and the 'new' career discourse in the last few decades. There is now growing emphasis on career self-management (CSM) to enhance and maintain employability for career mobility and success. Vocational psychology research also largely confirms this relationship. This depicts a very optimistic picture and inadvertently puts the blame for underemployment on the graduate because CSM is argued to be motivational and self-regulatory (King, 2004). Based on this, the unequivocal finding that social and educational background effects graduate employment outcomes, at least upon graduation, suggests that opportunities to engage in CSM and enhance employability may be bounded for some. In contributing to this research's overarching aim of understanding contemporary graduate careers this questions the self-directedness of CSM and, thereby, enhancing employability upon graduation.

Determinants of career self-management

Creating a meritocratic labour market in appearance, the UK government limits its responsibilities on GLM outcomes to providing opportunities for employability (Brown et al., 2003). This largely puts the responsibility for securing employment and blame for failure on the individual. Similarly, the 'new' career discourse, based on an assumption of limitless opportunities, proposes that careers today are more self-directed (Arthur et al., 2005; Hall,

2004). Hence, employability and engaging in activities geared towards enhancing and maintaining employability (i.e., CSM) are under the spot light in successful career development today.

CSM is largely treated as self-regulatory and motivational, and hence, has been associated with proactivity in enhancing and maintaining employability (Brown, Cober, Kane, Levy, & Shalhoop, 2006; De Vos, De Clippeleer et al., 2009; Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001). Nevertheless, recent theorising on employability (e.g., Brown et al., 2003; Forrier & Sels, 2003; Forrier et al., 2009) suggests that it is not only one's willingness but also her opportunities that need to be taken into account.

From a willingness perspective, CSM has been extensively studied in relation to a proactive personality (e.g., Brown et al., 2006; De Vos, De Clippeleer, et al., 2009; Klehe et al., 2012). Other individual factors that affect engagement in CSM are rather under-researched in relation to graduate employment. Recently Scurry and Blenkinsopp (2011) have pointed out a need to consider graduate preferences in understanding graduate underemployment and suggested that some graduates may choose low skilled work due to life choice preferences. Research on graduate preferences unequivocally reports preference for challenging and demanding work (Sutherland, 2011; Wolfgang et al., 2005). Within the increasing diversity in the graduate workforce it is reasonable to expect some variability in graduate preferences for work. Gerber et al. (2009) had already identified at least four different career orientations in the Swiss labour market, suggesting different types of career identity, one of which was

the disengaged career orientation comprised of individuals who do not put careers at the centre of their lives and who are more likely to live for the moment. Similarly, Tomlinson's (2007) analysis of student orientations suggested that some had a passive approach to securing work, either because they had given up on labour market goals or because they were more likely to choose easier entry but more secure jobs. This suggests that preferences may play a role in the extent to which graduates will engage in activities to enhance and maintain employability for graduate level employment.

From a dispositional perspective, self-esteem may also influence an individual's likelihood of engaging in activities towards enhancing and maintaining employability. Self-esteem refers to one's overall attitudes toward oneself and evaluation of self-worth (Rosenberg, 1979). High self-esteem individuals evaluate themselves as capable, acceptable, intelligent and attractive while low self-esteem individuals have self-doubts and evaluate themselves in negative terms (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003; Gray-Little & Hafdahl, 2000). Even though self-esteem is thought to be rather stable over time (Mortimer, Finch, & Kumka, 1982; Swann Jr, Chang-Schneider, & Larsen McClarty, 2007), it may be altered during key periods in one's life, such as during transitions (Demo, 1992; Riketta & Dauenheimer, 2003; Robins, Trzesniewski, Tracy, Gosling, & Potter, 2002; Trzesniewski, Donnellan, & Robins, 2003).

Korman's (1970, 1976) self-consistency theory proposes that when making career decisions, high self-esteem individuals are more likely to make job

choices that are congruent with their knowledge and skills. In support of this, for high self-esteem graduates, finding a job that matches their preferences and human capital was reported to be of more importance (Saks & Ashforth, 1997), in comparison with low self-esteem graduates. High self-esteem individuals were reported to increase their efforts when faced with setbacks (Korman, 1976), demonstrating that self-esteem may also be related to career resilience. Self-esteem was reported to be positively related to student expectations, career exploration and job search intensity (Emmanuelle, 2009; Greenhaus, Hawkins, & Brenner, 1983; Kanfer et al., 2001; Patton, Bartrum, & Creed, 2004). This suggests self-esteem may be related to engagement in CSM and enhancing employability, particularly career identity.

Based on the vocational psychology and the 'new' career research which advocates for the self-directedness of CSM, it is hypothesised here that graduates' willingness (reflected in job and career preferences, and self-esteem) will determine the extent to which they engage in CSM. The vast majority of research studies proactive personality as the indicator of willingness to engage in CSM, in contributing to this literature this research focuses on the role job and career preferences and self-esteem, which are also found to be associated with proactivity (Erdogan & Bauer, 2005; Parker, 1998; Parker & Collins, 2010; Sargent & Domberger, 2007), as two other possible markers of willingness to engage in CSM. Hence, it is hypothesised here that:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Upon graduation from university, (a) job and career preferences and (b) self-esteem will be related to the

extent to which graduates engage in CSM (career exploration, job search, networking and guidance seeking).

Particularly at the start of careers, career clarity was reported to be rather low for graduates (Arnold & Mackenzie-Davey, 1994). The opportunities to enhance employability at this stage may be bounded by graduates' social and educational background, explaining part of the unequivocal findings on graduates' access to good jobs. Upon graduation from university, some graduates may not be able to develop the career competencies associated with employability (*know-how, know-why, know-whom*; De Fillippi & Arthur, 1994). In formation of identity (reflected in aspirations, interests and preferences), developmental career theories attach great importance to demographic background (e.g., Gottfredson, 1996). Similarly, Bourdieu's (1990) notion of *habitus* suggests that one's options in life are confined based on membership to social groups and outside of this *field* the individual will be a 'fish out of water' (Reay, Crozier, & Clayton, 2009). While it is likely that university experience will alter and develop 'graduate identity' to reflect the attributions of the society on graduates (Holmes, 2001; Perrone & Vickers, 2003), it is also demonstrated that students from disadvantaged backgrounds have been 'pathologized' for not having higher abilities and/or the appropriate aspirations and attitudes for the future in the same way as 'traditional' students (Leathwood & O'Connell, 2003). In fact, Greenbank and Hepburn (2008) have reported that working class students' values were an important factor effecting career decision making. Hence, some graduates may not develop a career identity/self-awareness (i.e.,

‘who am I?’ and ‘who I want to be?’) commensurate with graduate employability, as described by employers and policy makers; this may be rooted in their early socialisation. This may be explained by the availability and quality of networks and social capital to reinforce graduate identity and provide access to information about jobs and influence over employers (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964; Redmond, 2006). In fact, it was reported that personal connections and contacts were cited amongst the most important methods used by graduates in the UK in finding the first job after graduation (Brennan et al., 2001).

In addition to social background, educational history may also reflect opportunities to engage in employability enhancing activities upon graduation. Pitcher and Purcell (1998) reported that graduates in the more prestigious, pre-1992 UK universities, have the benefit of employers’ ‘milk round’ attention, where they can meet other graduates from their universities and employer representatives working in traditional graduate employment. This increases their opportunities for engaging in career exploration, job search and possibly networking. With regards to the effect of degree subject, professional degree subjects tend to be closely related to graduates’ future employment, whereas non-professional subjects tend to provide graduates with general, academic subject knowledge with very little relevance to actual employment (Harvey, 2001). Therefore, students in professional degree courses are generally socialised into employment opportunities, while that is a rarity for those in non-professional degree courses as there are “no prescribed entry routes” (Scholarios, Lockyer, & Johnson, 2003, p. 183). In fact, arts, humanities and

social science graduates reported that the most pronounced reason for taking up low skilled work was that they could not find a better job (Brennan et al., 2001) and pursuing a post-graduate degree to specialise and enhance their employability in the GLM was found to be common amongst this group (Tomlinson, 2007, 2008). Work experience (e.g., work placements and internships), is also likely to contribute to employability as it is argued to increase an individual's business awareness, and that of personal values and interests and also help build networks (CBI, 2009; UKCES, 2009). They are, therefore, strongly recommended to be embedded in the HE curricula (CBI, 2007) to increase graduate employability. Degree classification may have an inhibitory effect on CSM for those who did not achieve a 2:1 or 1st degree. The use of this criterion in recruitment and selection as a pre-screening device appears to have been internalised by the students (Tomlinson, 2008) and those who achieved a lower degree classification may feel a sense of futility in CSM.

As also advocated by the positional conflict perspective to employability (Blasko et al., 2002; Brown, 2003) it is hypothesised here that the opportunities to enhance employability, at least at the start of careers, may be bounded for some based on their social and educational background, putting them at a relative disadvantage in competition of high skilled 'graduate' jobs. Hence, it is hypothesised here that:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): (a) Social and (b) educational background (university type, degree subject, degree class and work experience) effect the extent to which graduates engage in CSM

(career exploration, job search, networking and guidance seeking).

The role of CSM on perceived employability

There is no agreed definition of employability. Nevertheless, it is clear to see that it refers to 'employment-ability'. Adapting Hillage and Pollard's (1998) definition, graduate employability in this research is defined as the capability to secure, maintain and if required/desired obtain new graduate level employment. This refers to the employment outcomes associated with employability. Commensurate with previous research, this research examines perceived employability, i.e., the graduates' perception that they can secure and maintain graduate level employment, that is shown to be related to job- and career-related attitudes and outcomes (e.g., De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011; De Cuyper, Van der Heijden, & De Witte, 2011; Mäkikangas, De Cuyper, Mauno, & Kinnunen, 2012).

How graduates obtain and maintain graduate level employment is defined by adapting Forrier et al.'s (2009) conceptualisation of movement capital (i.e., employability), which largely corresponds to the career competencies associated with the new careers (De Fillippi & Arthur, 1994) and encompasses human capital, social capital, self-awareness and adaptability. This definition not only reflects the changing employer perspective on what constitutes employability (Brown & Hesketh, 2004) but also suggests that it is not only graduates' possession of human capital or position based on social and educational background that determine their perceived chances of securing and

maintaining 'graduate' level employment but also self-awareness and adaptability. The two latter components of employability refer to an individual's career motivation and meaning, and ability/willingness to change in response to GLM demands, and hence, connote a process of developing employability perceptions, which are relatively under-researched in relation to graduate employability.

This process of forming employability perceptions is argued to be reflected in CSM, through which individuals develop an understanding of their skills, abilities and ambitions, and the structure of opportunities that are available (De Vos, Dewettinck, et al., 2009) and devise strategies for attaining their goals (Kossek, Roberts, Fisher, & DeMarr, 1998). For new entrants in the labour market, career exploration, job search and networking have commonly been cited as behaviours associated with CSM. The literature almost unequivocally predicts and demonstrates a positive link between CSM and perceived employability (e.g., Barber, 1998; Eby et al., 2003) and actual employment outcomes (e.g., Zikic & Saks, 2009). Nevertheless, considering the examination of availability and quality of graduate level employment in Chapter Three, it can be speculated that within the UK GLM, CSM may either work to enhance or worsen perceived employability. In other words, after engaging in CSM graduates may develop an understanding that their chances of securing high skilled work are actually limited. Hence, without proposing a direction, it is hypothesised here that:

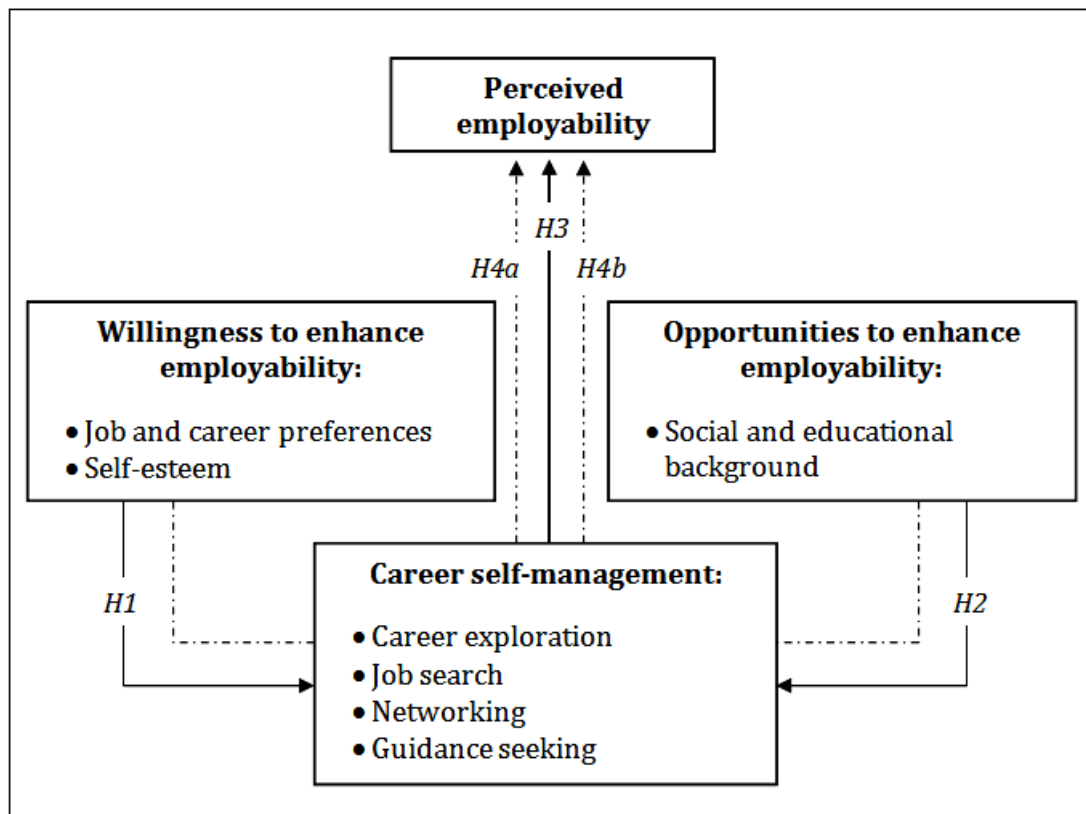
Hypothesis 3 (H3): Upon graduation from university, CSM (career exploration, job search, networking, guidance seeking) will be related to graduates' perceived employability.

Considering that both the 'new' career and the positional conflict perspectives have found some support with regards to the role of willingness and opportunities on employability and it was earlier hypothesised that both will be related to the extent to which graduates engage in CSM to enhance employability, it is further hypothesised here that:

Hypothesis 4 (H4): (a) Willingness (job and career preferences, and self-esteem) and (b) opportunities (social and educational background) to engage in CSM will indirectly influence perceived employability via CSM.

The research framework proposed here suggests that employability is formed as a result of a process involving both willingness and opportunities that determine the extent to which graduates engage in CSM. Figure 5.1, therefore, extends the predictions of the skills policies and the 'new' careers discourse by including the positional conflict perspective to employability and proposing a role for opportunities for engaging in CSM and employability development based on social and educational background in upon graduation.

Figure 5.1 Hypothesised research model testing the self-directedness of employability upon graduation



The occupational boundaries of the graduate labour market

Review of the literature on the overall debates on job quality in Chapter Three suggests that highly skilled job creation in the UK lags behind supply of graduates (Felstead et al., 2007). While it is commonly agreed that employment in low skilled occupations clearly reflects graduate underemployment, there is some debate in that in ‘emerging’ (i.e., associate professional) occupations. These are commonly a step up from early underemployment in low skilled work for the majority of graduates (Kitchen et al., 2008), and are, therefore, taken for granted to be the ‘new’ graduate occupations by some (Elias & Purcell, 2004b). Labour economists explain this by referring to the unobserved

heterogeneity in the graduate workforce (reflected in knowledge and skills, and commonly measured with reference to educational history) and argue that this may actually reflect employment commensurate with the knowledge and skills of some graduates (Ireland et al., 2009). This is contested by critics on the grounds of evidence that suggests graduates are commonly being compensated for the lack of intermediately skilled workforce and this is argued to constitute a 'definitional trap' in graduate employment (Keep & Mayhew, 2004). Little is known, however, with regards to what graduates actually do and the extent of graduation in these occupations, with a few exceptions (Chillas, 2010; Purcell et al., 2004).

Sengupta, Edwards and Tsai (2009) advocate that the ordinary characteristics of jobs need to be considered in understanding 'good' and 'bad' jobs. This research assumes that traditional graduate occupations (i.e., managerial and professional) reflect 'good' graduate jobs and involve 'design and development of new products/services and information systems' (Mason, 1996, p. 95), while offering opportunities for skill development, career progression and high wages (King, 2003). Contrasting job quality for traditional, 'emerging' and non-graduate occupations allows a consideration of how 'graduated' emerging occupations have become and guides our understanding of the terrain in which contemporary graduate careers realise.

The review of job quality in the GLM in Chapter Three drew from multiple disciplinary treatments of job quality to achieve this. Labour economists tend to focus on wages or job satisfaction; sociologists devote their attention to skills,

status and discretion at work; and psychologists are primarily concerned with intrinsic job characteristics. Each perspective has been found to have explanatory power and relate to global measures of how 'good' or 'bad' a job is (Kalleberg & Vaisey, 2005), although some dimensions may be more salient than others for different groups of workers (Lloyd & Payne, 2011). Objective factors, especially wages, have important policy implications, in terms of fighting income inequality and exploitation of employees. On the other hand, subjective factors, such as perceived job security and job content, are especially important for employee attitudes, well-being and productivity. The approach to operationalising job quality for 'graduate' jobs in this research makes use of both objective and subjective job characteristics.

The examination of the evidence from the overall labour market in Chapter Three has suggested that while increasing work intensification and job insecurity is commonly democratised across occupations in the UK, intermediate skilled occupations require lower work skills, offer less task discretion, development opportunities and poorer relations with management to negotiate individual and professional needs, and pay lower wages in comparison to high skilled occupations. Moreover, a difficulty/reluctance was observed on the part of the employers to upgrade and/or create new jobs to take advantage of graduate knowledge, skills and abilities (Blenkinsopp & Scurry, 2007; Mason, 2002). Based on this evidence and taking the unobserved heterogeneity into account, it is hypothesised here that employment in

'emerging' graduate occupations will represent underemployment for graduates such that:

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Job quality (i.e., job complexity, work skills, task discretion, work intensity, training and development opportunities, perceived job security and pay) in 'emerging' graduate occupations will differ from that in traditional and non-graduate occupations.

While there is a scarcity of research examining systematic differences in employment-related attitudes across occupations (Felstead et al., 2007), research on graduate underemployment and job design theories largely propose that experience of underemployment (particularly due to intrinsic aspects of work) is related to negative attitudes towards the job and the organisation and, hence, higher turnover intentions (e.g., Burgess & Connell, 2008; Maynard, Joseph, et al., 2006; McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011).

The opportunity for skill use and development through work has been shown repeatedly to be a primary factor in graduates' choice of organisations and jobs (Nabi, 2003; Terjesen et al., 2007). Despite the rhetoric of changing psychological contracts, graduates appear to value traditional organisational careers, where they can use and develop their skills and knowledge (Gerber et al., 2009). 'Traditional' graduate jobs are also more likely to provide individuals with the flexibility to negotiate further training and development or shape task content in the manner described by Hornung, et al.'s (2010) 'idiosyncratic deals'. Graduates who perceive low person-job fit, in terms of congruence

between their desire for competence development or autonomy and actual skill utilisation and job content, may feel relatively deprived in relation to a referent standard (in this case, other graduates in traditional graduate occupations) (Feldman et al., 2002); or they may experience breach of the psychological contract with employers (Erdogan et al., 2011), as indicated by research on graduate experiences in the early years of employment (Polach, 2004). Perceived person-job misfit, relative deprivation and psychological contract breach have all been associated with negative attitudes and well-being (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2000; Lambert et al., 2003; Tekleab and Taylor, 2003). Assuming that (i) employment in 'emerging' occupations represents graduate underemployment in comparison to that in traditional graduate occupations and 'less' so in comparison to that in non-graduate occupations; and that (ii) the great majority of graduates move on to 'emerging' occupations from non-graduate occupations, it is expected that employment- and career-related attitudes for graduates in 'emerging' occupations will be less favourable, in comparison to those in traditional graduate occupations and more favourable in comparison to those in non-graduate occupations, due to differences in opportunities for development. Therefore, job characteristics that lead to development through work (i.e., work skills and task discretion) and training and development opportunities provided by the organisation will have more impact on these outcomes in comparison to job security and pay. Hence, it is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Employment related outcomes (job satisfaction, organisational commitment, perceived availability of alternatives, career satisfaction and psychological well-being) for graduates in 'emerging' occupations will differ from those for graduates in traditional and non-graduate occupations.

Hypothesis 7 (H7): Intrinsic job characteristics that lead to development through the job (i.e., work skills and task discretion) and training and development opportunities provided by the organisation will have a greater impact on graduates' job satisfaction, organisational commitment, perceived availability of alternatives, career satisfaction and psychological well-being than job security and pay.

Graduate career mobility

Despite being treated as a temporary 'transitional' phase in graduate careers, graduate underemployment is rarely studied from a job transition perspective. The conceptual analysis in Chapter Four aimed to do this by bringing together different research perspectives (e.g., from vocational and organisational psychology, the 'new' career discourse, a constraint-friendly approach to career mobility, and economics) on employability, underemployment and career mobility. The constraint-friendly Forrier et al. (2009) conceptual model on career mobility allowed parsimony and flexibility to incorporate these different perspectives into one model of career mobility with alternative explanations.

This analysis suggested that both individual (employability) and structural (e.g., availability of opportunities) factors need to be taken into account in

understanding career mobility for graduates. In particular, availability of jobs in the GLM stands out as an important structural determinant of career mobility from different perspectives, e.g., the entrapment hypothesis and turnover models. Based on the evidence that there are less clear career routes associated with non-professional degree courses (i.e., arts, humanities and social sciences) (Scholarios et al., 2003) and that graduates from these degree courses are more likely to be underemployed in non-graduate occupations upon graduation (HESA, 2012), it is assumed in this section that the availability of graduate occupations in the GLM for graduates from non-professional degree courses will be limited, in comparison to those from professional degree courses (e.g., engineering). Based on this assumption and building on the hypotheses developed in relation to the self-directedness of employability upon graduation from university and the occupational boundaries of the GLM, this section develops propositions to explore graduates' entry into and movement out of underemployment and later career mobility and outcomes.

Entry into underemployment

It has been argued in this chapter so far that upon graduation from university, graduate employability will be determined directly by the extent to which graduates engage in CSM and indirectly via their willingness (job and career preferences, and self-esteem) and opportunities (social and educational background) to do so. Based on the vocational psychology literature, the conceptual analysis in Chapter Four (see Figure 4.2), has suggested that those graduates who have failed to develop career goals (referring to self-awareness

component of employability) via CSM may be more susceptible to experience career indecision. From a self-determination theory perspective to job transitions, it is argued that individuals' will be more willing to engage in transitions if their goals and motives match the alternatives in the labour market (Forrier et al., 2009). Following from this and considering the diversity in 'graduate' occupations today, in seeking the first job upon graduation, graduates who have clear career goals may be less likely to experience career indecision than those who have vague career goals. Career indecision, in turn, is shown to be associated with procrastination in career decision making or making a hyper-vigilant, haphazard decision (Callanan & Greenhaus, 1992; Hall, 1992). In times of high labour demand, the likelihood and negative effects of career indecision are less pronounced (Feldman, 2003). Given what we know of the availability of graduate jobs in the GLM, the effects are likely to be heightened for graduates, particularly for those from non-professional degree courses who are assumed to have fewer opportunities in the GLM in this research. This leads to the following proposition:

Proposition 1 (P1): Unfavourable employability perceptions will be more likely to result in career indecision for graduates from non-professional degree courses, in comparison to those from professional degree courses.

As noted above, CSM may either function to enhance or diminish perceived employability. Particularly for those with unfavourable employability perceptions, the limited availability of graduate jobs in the GLM may lower

perceptions of control in securing 'good' jobs and, hence, result in discouragement (perceived difficulty of movement) from the graduate labour market. Availability of jobs may also influence perceptions of competence/control for graduates who have engaged in CSM and developed favourable employability perceptions upon graduation, such that not being able to secure 'good' jobs despite, for instance, extensive job search and networking, may lead some graduates to disillusionment with the opportunities in the GLM. Given the pervasiveness of underemployment for non-professional degree graduates in low skilled work, at least at the start of careers, it may be argued here that these graduates will be more likely be discouraged from the GLM. This is reflected in the following proposition:

Proposition 2 (P2): Unfavourable employability perceptions will be more likely to result in discouragement from the GLM for graduates from non-professional degree courses, in comparison to those from professional degree courses.

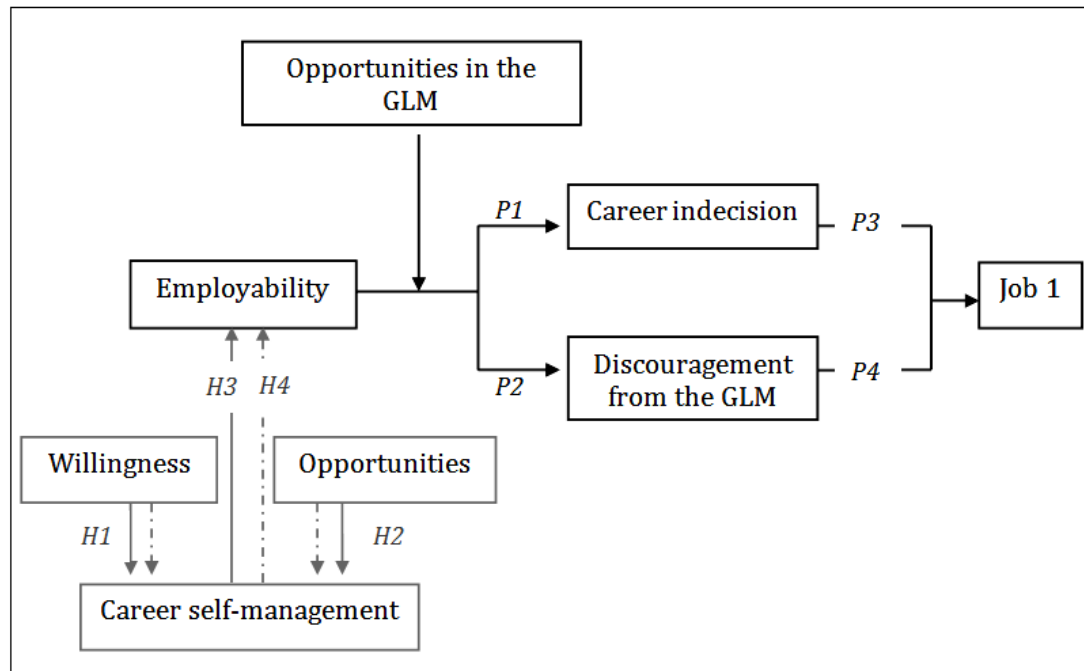
Research unequivocally suggests a positive relationship between CSM and employment outcomes. Nevertheless, this may be an artefact of the measurement of employment outcomes within the vocational psychology research, which commonly uses proxy measures, such as speed of finding employment, employment status or number of job offers (e.g., Wanberg et al., 2005; Yanar, Budworth, & Latham, 2009). The issue with regards to graduate employment is, however, concerned with the quality of their employment rather than unemployment, although there is evidence to suggest this trend to

be changing with the 2008 economic recession (Osborne, 2012). Employment outcomes in this study are conceptualised in terms of job quality and whether or not it indicates underemployment as reflected in graduates' perception. It can be argued that, despite the extensive research evidence suggesting a positive link between CSM, employability and employment outcomes, CSM may still give way to university-to-work transitions that result in underemployment via career indecision and/or discouragement from the GLM depending on the structure of opportunities. In other words, those graduates who have engaged in CSM and formed favourable employability perceptions may be less likely to experience career indecision and discouragement from the GLM if their knowledge, skills and abilities are in high demand. Career indecision and discouragement from the GLM are likely to result in underemployment for graduates in the first job. From a self-determination perspective to job transitions (Forrier et al., 2009), they will experience difficulty in matching career goals to the structure of opportunities in the GLM and/or a perceived lack of control over entry into desired jobs (see Figure 5.2). Hence it is proposed here that:

Proposition 3 (P3): Graduates who experience career indecision upon graduation will be more likely to be underemployed in the first job.

Proposition 4 (P4): Graduates who experience discouragement from the GLM upon graduation will be more likely to be underemployed in the first job.

Figure 5.2 Research framework for exploring graduates' entry into underemployment upon graduation



Note. This framework builds on Figure 5.1 which is presented in grey.

Movement out of underemployment

Despite disconfirming evidence on a wage penalty and graduate destinations (Mosca & Wright, 2011), graduate underemployment is increasingly being treated as a temporary phenomenon in graduate careers, as they have been shown to move on to 'emerging' occupations within three to five years after graduation (Elias & Purcell, 2004a; Kitchen et al., 2008). The 'new' career discourse largely equates transitions with career success (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) but the drivers and quality of this transition out of low skilled work, particularly for high skilled workers, are largely left unexplored.

The stepping stone hypothesis predicts that graduates will demonstrate higher mobility due to their higher human capital, in comparison to non-graduate

colleagues. Yet, a number of difficulties on both the structural and individual side can be identified in relation to movement out of underemployment in the first job. On the structural side, the entrapment hypothesis predicts that underemployment will limit development of human capital, signal lack of competency to prospective employers and, therefore, particularly in segmented labour markets, will limit mobility. Employability in this perspective is largely treated as synonymous with human capital. Application of this to Forrier et al.'s (2009) conceptual model suggests that opportunities to develop employability for the underemployed, at least on the human capital dimension, will be limited. For graduates in large graduate employers, development through the job and organisational career management have been shown to complement CSM (Sturges, Guest, Conway, & Davey, 2002). To the contrary, research on graduate underemployment commonly reports lack of opportunity for development, autonomy and progression for graduates (Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2011). These intrinsic features of work that contribute to the qualitative difference between traditional and, 'emerging' and non-graduate occupations are also proposed to be the work characteristics that lead way to crucial psychological states such as experienced meaningfulness and responsibility in job design theories (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Oldham & Hackman, 2010) which may indirectly contribute to graduates' employability, by enhancing self-awareness and adaptability. This suggests that underemployment in the first job negatively effects graduate employability via lack of opportunities for development. Hence, for those who are underemployed in the first job, it is proposed here:

Proposition 5 (P5): Underemployment in the first job negatively effects employability due to lack of opportunities for CSM provided by the job/organisation.

In willingness to enhance employability, perceptions developed prior to accepting the first job may have a role. For instance, previous behaviour of CSM was found to be related to subsequent levels of engagement (Cheung & Arnold, 2010). Moreover, perceived employability was found to be rather stable, at least across a one-year span (Berntson et al., 2008). This may further reinforce graduates' career indecision and/or discouragement. Moreover, for those in large graduate employers, organisational support for career development has been shown to be related to graduates' CSM skills: those who engage in activities to enhance employability receive more support from their organisations (Sturges, Conway, Guest, & Liefoghe, 2005). This is less likely to be the case for those who perceive themselves to be underemployed in the first job. Hence, it is proposed here that:

Proposition 6 (P6): Underemployment in the first job negatively effects employability due to graduates' prior lack of CSM skills and unfavourable perceptions of employability.

This suggests that graduates' employability development in the first job may be limited both by organisational and individual constraints. Graduates may experience difficulty in moving out of underemployment due to not being able to enhance employability, if their knowledge, skills and abilities are not in demand in the GLM. Ease of movement is largely associated with the perception

of control one has over desired outcomes (Forrier et al., 2009). Hence, graduates who have enhanced their employability (despite being underemployed) and for whom there are favourable opportunities in the GLM (i.e., those from professional degree courses in comparison to graduates from non-professional degree courses) may perceive an ease of movement out of underemployment. This is unlikely to be the case for graduates of non-professional degree courses, who are assumed, in this research, to have less 'graduate' opportunities in the GLM. Hence, experience of underemployment in the first job for these graduates may result in 'learned helplessness' (Seligman, 1972), which is associated with lower self-esteem, psychological well-being and perceived control (Feldman, 1996). This leads to the following proposition:

Proposition 7 (P7): Unfavourable perception of employability will be more likely to result in perceived difficulty of movement out of initial underemployment for graduates from non-professional degree courses, in comparison to those from professional degree courses.

Experience of underemployment may, nevertheless, help form career identity and insight, at least by clarifying career goals and motives, particularly for those who experienced initial career indecision. Turnover models predict higher likelihood of a job transition if the sacrifices made by leaving the job are lower than the benefits offered by the subsequent job (Forrier et al., 2009). Hence, it can be argued that underemployment in the first job may not contribute to graduate employability due to lack of developmental opportunities offered via intrinsic aspects of work and graduates' prior perception of employability but

may still instil a willingness to move to 'something better' if there are opportunities in the GLM that are better than the current job. Assuming there are fewer opportunities in the GLM for graduates from non-professional degree courses, in comparison to those from professional degree courses, this leads to the following proposition:

Proposition 8 (P8): Perception of employability will be more likely to result in willingness to move out of initial underemployment for graduates from professional degree courses, in comparison to those from non-professional degree courses.

The entrapment hypothesis on career mobility following underemployment suggests that mobility will be limited within the secondary segment of the labour market, due to availability of jobs and the individuals' lack of development through work (Scherer, 2004), regardless of the psychological experience of underemployment for the individual. In fact, upward mobility *within* the secondary segment of the labour market is not uncommon (Dekker et al., 2002; Purcell et al., 2010; Sander & De Grip, 2004). The finding that the great majority of graduates move out from non-graduate work to emerging occupations within three to five years of careers (Kitchen et al., 2008; Purcell et al., 2006) also supports this upward mobility within the secondary segment, as the latter are assumed to be of inferior quality in comparison to traditional graduate occupations in this research. This suggests that movement out of underemployment in the first job is likely to result in movement into the intermediate segment of the GLM. Employability in the current literature is

argued to reflect adaptability on the individual's part to the conditions of the labour market (Fugate et al., 2004; McArdle et al., 2007). In this regard, as predicted by turnover and SDT literatures on job transitions (Forrier et al., 2009), willingness and perceived ease of movement may accelerate movement out of underemployment for the graduate, nevertheless, the quality of this movement will depend on the nature of opportunities in the GLM. Based on the assumption that opportunities for high skilled work in the GLM are limited for graduates from non-professional degree, it is expected that for these graduates movement out of underemployment in the first job is more likely to result in further underemployment in 'emerging' occupations, in comparison to graduates from professional degree courses:

Proposition 9 (P9): The quality of transitions out of underemployment will depend on the nature of opportunities in the GLM, such that willingness to move and perceived ease of movement are more likely to result in transitions into 'emerging' occupations, rather than into traditional graduate occupations, for graduates from non-professional degree courses in comparison to those from professional degree courses.

Career mobility and outcomes following early underemployment

It is argued so far that early underemployment may affect graduates' mobility in the first job. Referring to the feedback loop in Forrier et al.'s (2009) conceptual model between jobs, it can be argued that early underemployment may have spill-over effects in later career development and outcomes, unless graduates develop career insight and adaptability through experience and/or manage to secure jobs where they are offered development opportunities. The evidence

suggests that within three and a half years after graduation, 80 per cent of the graduates in the UK were working in either intermediate or high skilled occupations (Kitchen et al., 2008). The great majority of these graduates were found to be in the 'new' graduate occupation categories (Purcell et al., 2005, 2006), which are, as noted in Chapter Three, largely composed of 'emerging' graduate occupations. This suggests that for the majority of graduates who move out of underemployment careers realise within the intermediate segment of the GLM. In understanding contemporary graduate careers this leads to the following proposition:

Proposition 10 (P10): For graduates who move out of initial underemployment, further job transitions will realise within the intermediate segment of the GLM.

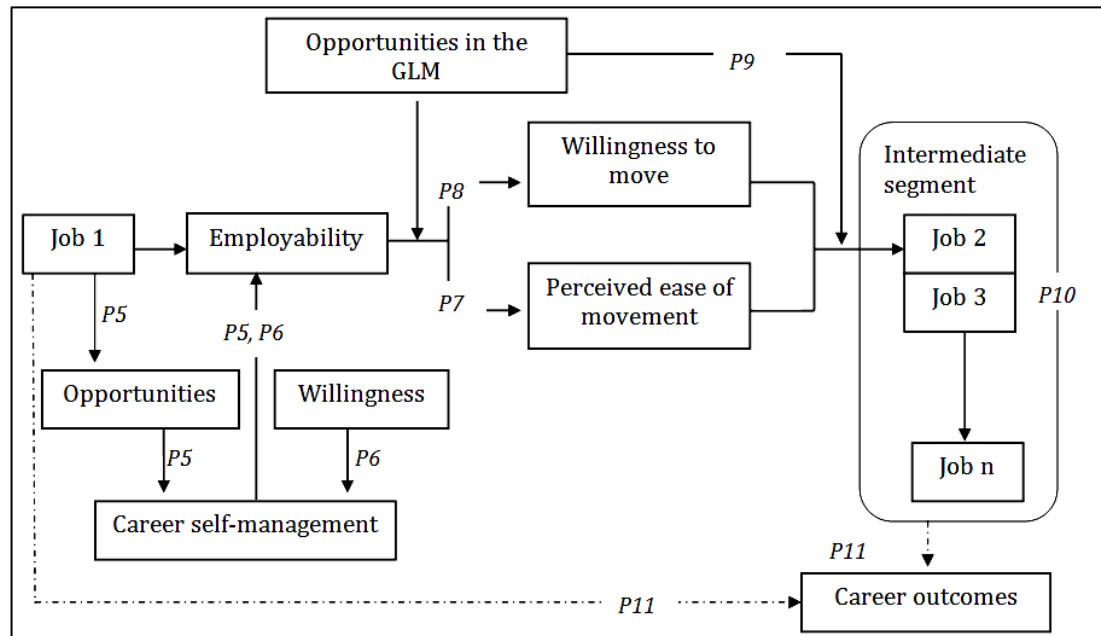
The spill-over effects of early underemployment are likely to be manifested in graduates' career success and well-being. With regards to objective career success, it is assumed in this study that traditional graduate occupations will pay higher salaries. Hence 'objectively' graduates in non-graduate and 'emerging' occupations would appear less successful. In terms of career satisfaction, i.e., the subjective indicator of career success, however, it is rather difficult to make a prediction, as it is based not only on actual achievement but also on perceptions/feelings regarding these achievements and may be determined in comparison to oneself or a referent other (Dries, Pepermans, & Carlier, 2008; Heslin, 2005). It may be argued, nevertheless, that early underemployment affects well-being and career satisfaction negatively as this is

likely to dampen career progression (Feldman, 1996; McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011; Scherer, 2004). Moreover, career success has been shown to be associated with the three career competencies identified by De Fillippi and Arthur (1994) (i.e., *know-how*, *know-why* and *know-whom*) (Eby et al., 2003; Ng et al., 2005). Compared to graduates who started their careers in high skilled work, those who started in underemployment are less likely to develop these competencies due to lack of organisational support and/or their own lack of willingness to engage in CSM (as proposed in P5 and P6) this suggests that experience of early underemployment is likely influence career satisfaction and work related well-being negatively. Particularly for those who experience prolonged underemployment this may result in a 'learned helplessness' effect, associated with poor psychological well-being and self-esteem (Feldman, 1996). The spill-over effects of underemployment in later career outcomes are formulated in the following proposition:

Proposition 11 (P11): The experience of early underemployment will negatively effect (a) well-being and (b) career satisfaction.

Overall, the propositions developed for studying graduates' movement out of underemployment (considering the role of opportunities (P5) and prior employability and willingness (P6) on employability development; the role of perceived employability on willingness (P8) and perceived ease of movement (P9), depending on opportunities in the GLM; the quality of transitions out of underemployment (P9); and the effects of early underemployment on later career mobility (P10) and outcomes (P11)) are summarised in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3 Research framework for exploring graduates' movement out of underemployment



Chapter conclusions

This chapter developed hypotheses and propositions in relation to the nature of graduate employability, the occupational boundaries of the GLM and graduate career mobility with the overarching aim of understanding contemporary graduate careers (see Table 5.1 for a list of hypotheses and propositions and Figure 5.4 for a summary of the overall research framework). Bringing together different and commonly non-communicating perspectives to employability, job quality and career mobility, this research framework questions the self-directedness of graduate employability at the start of careers; the assumption of limitless opportunities in the GLM; and explores graduates' movement into and out of early underemployment and the effects of this experience on later career mobility and outcomes and questions the determinants and temporality of graduate underemployment. Chapter Six operationalises this framework next.

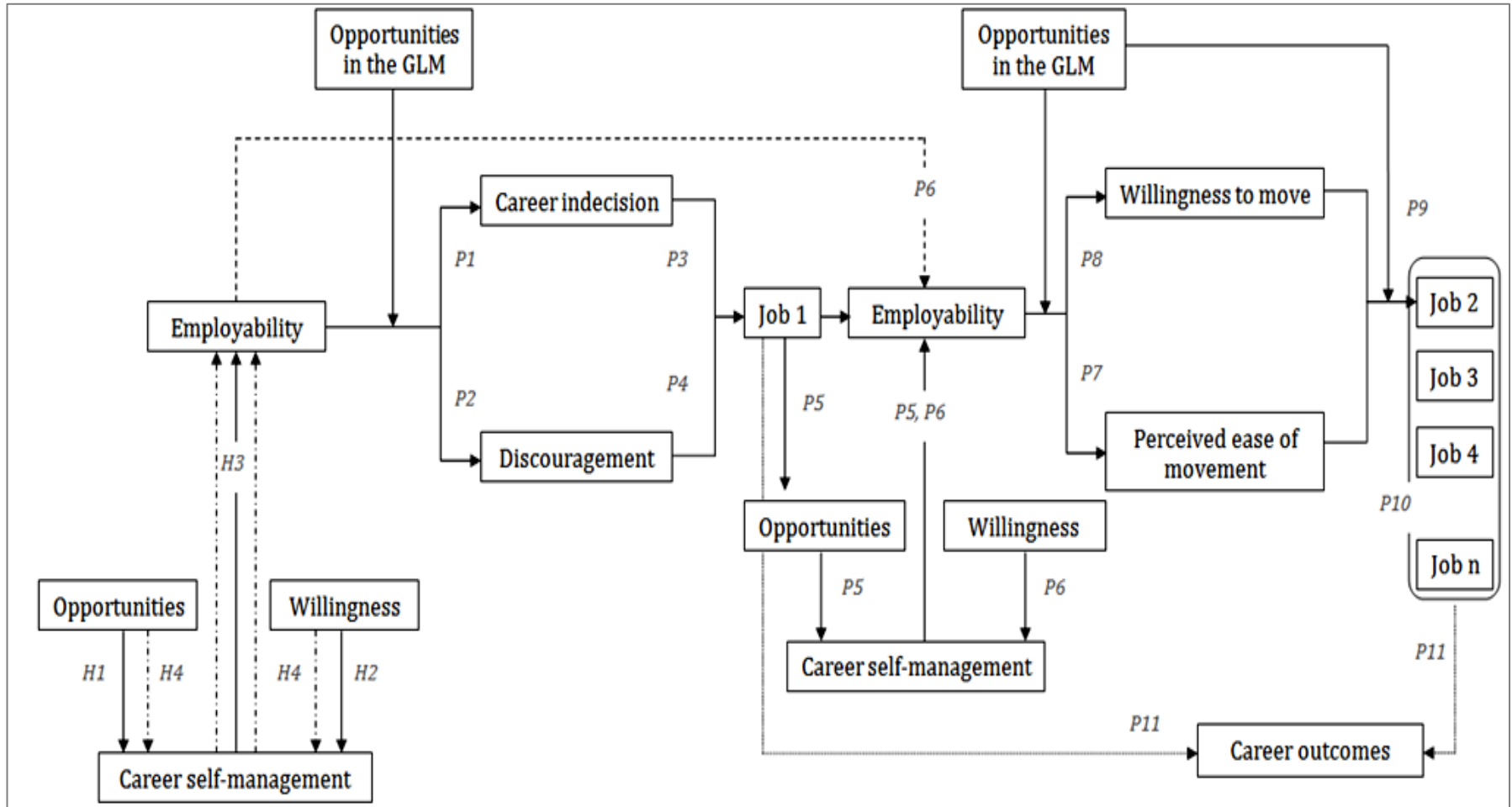
Table 5.1 List of hypotheses and propositions corresponding to the research objectives

Hypotheses (H)	
<i>Research objective 1: To examine the factors associated with enhancing graduate employability prior to securing the first job and the extent to which this reflects a self-directed process</i>	
H1	Upon graduation from university, (a) job and career preferences and (b) self-esteem will be related to the extent to which graduates engage in CSM (career exploration, job search, networking and guidance seeking).
H2	(a) Social and (b) educational background (university type, degree subject, degree class and work experience) affects the extent to which graduates engage in CSM (career exploration, job search, networking and guidance seeking).
H3	Upon graduation from university, CSM (career exploration, job search, networking, guidance seeking) will be related to graduates' perceived employability.
H4	(a) Willingness (job and career preferences, and self-esteem) and (b) opportunities (social and educational background) to engage in CSM will indirectly influence perceived employability via CSM.
<i>Research objective 2: To examine the occupational boundaries within which graduate careers develop</i>	
H5	Job quality (i.e., job complexity, work skills, task discretion, work intensity, training and development opportunities, perceived job security and pay) in emerging graduate occupations will differ from that in traditional and non-graduate occupations.
H6	Employment related outcomes (job satisfaction, organisational commitment, perceived availability of alternatives, career satisfaction and psychological well-being) for graduates in emerging occupations will differ from those for graduates in traditional and non-graduate occupations.
H7	Intrinsic job characteristics that lead to development through the job (i.e., work skills and task discretion) and training and development opportunities provided by the organisation will have a greater impact on graduates' job satisfaction, organisational commitment, perceived availability of alternatives, career satisfaction and psychological well-being than job security and pay.

Table 5.1 continued...

Propositions (P)	
<i>Research objective 3: To explore graduates' entry into and movement out of early underemployment and the effects of this experience in later career mobility and outcomes</i>	
P1	Unfavourable employability perceptions will be more likely to result in career indecision for graduates from non-professional degree courses, in comparison to those from professional degree courses.
P2	Unfavourable employability perceptions will be more likely to result in discouragement from the GLM for graduates from non-professional degree courses, in comparison to those from professional degree courses.
P3	Graduates who experience career indecision upon graduation will be more likely to be underemployed in the first job.
P4	Graduates who experience discouragement from the GLM upon graduation will be more likely to be underemployed in the first job.
P5	Underemployment in the first job negatively affects employability due to lack of opportunities for CSM provided by the job/organisation.
P6	Underemployment in the first job negatively affects employability due to graduates' prior lack of CSM skills and unfavourable perceptions of employability.
P7	Unfavourable perception of employability will be more likely to result in perceived difficulty of movement out of initial underemployment for graduates from non-professional degree courses, in comparison to those from professional degree courses.
P8	Perception of employability will be more likely to result in willingness to move out of initial underemployment for graduates from professional degree courses, in comparison to those from non-professional degree courses.
P9	The quality of transitions out of underemployment will depend on the nature of opportunities in the GLM, such that willingness to move and perceived ease of movement are more likely to result in transitions into emerging occupations, rather than into traditional graduate occupations, for graduates from non-professional degree courses in comparison to those from professional degree courses.
P10	For graduates who move out of initial underemployment, further job transitions will realise within the intermediate segment of the GLM.
P11	The experience of early underemployment will negatively affect well-being and career satisfaction.

Figure 5.4 Summary of the proposed research framework to study contemporary graduate careers



Chapter Six

6. RESEARCH STRATEGY

Introduction

With the overarching aim of understanding contemporary graduate careers, this chapter aims to operationalise the conceptual framework offered in Chapter Five. To this aim, the research strategy involved three phases of data collection and analysis that corresponds to the three research objectives identified as a result of the conceptual analysis on graduate employability, occupational boundaries of the GLM and career mobility. A mixed methods research strategy was used to achieve this aim. Phase I aimed to understand graduate employability upon graduation from university. An online survey was created to measure willingness (i.e., self-esteem and preferences) and opportunities (i.e., social and educational background) to enhance employability, CSM (i.e., career exploration, job search, networking and guidance seeking) and perceived employability and was administered to graduates of 2009 and 2010 ('survey of 2009/2010 graduates'). The occupational boundaries of the GLM were examined in Phase II using graduate data from a nationally representative sample of employees in the UK ('Skills Survey 2006'). Measures of job quality (i.e., job complexity, gradueness skills,

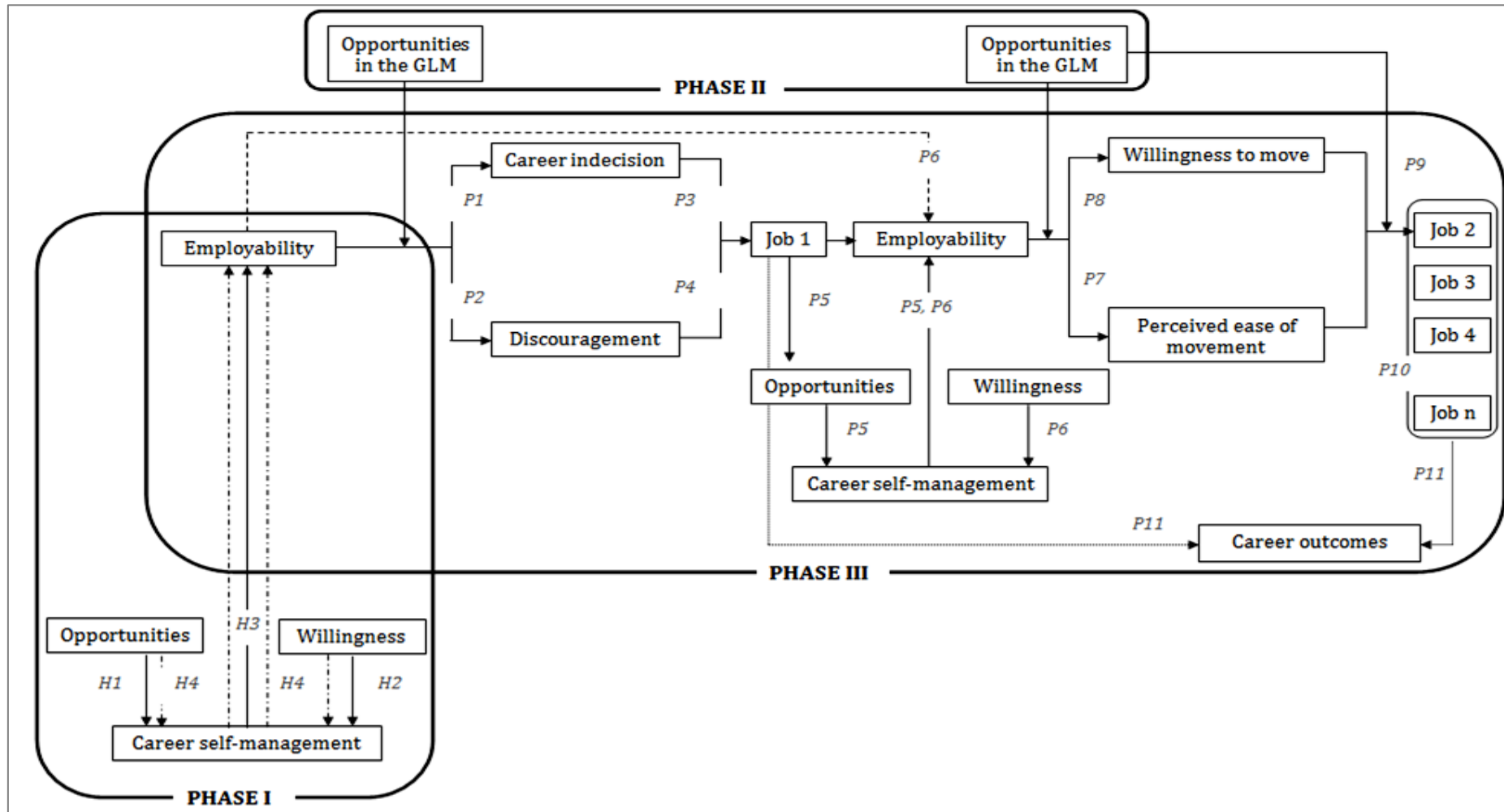
intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of work) and employment-related outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction, organisational commitment, perceived availability of alternatives, career satisfaction, psychological well-being and negative carry-over from work) were included in this analysis. Following this, Phase III explored career mobility for graduates via semi-structured in-depth interviews with 37 graduates in the UK. This involved a career history analysis starting with securing the first job upon graduation and extending up to the first ten years of employment.

A hypothetico-deductive research strategy is used in Phase I (examining graduate employability) and Phase II (examining occupational boundaries of the GLM). This involved an a priori deduction of the hypotheses, as described in Chapter Five, based on theory and research on the graduate employability and the structure of opportunities in the GLM. Phase III (exploring graduate career mobility) is exploratory and provides in-depth information on graduates' career development corresponding to the propositions developed in Chapter Five. Qualitative data from Phase III also contributed to explaining findings from Phase I and Phase II as career history analysis provided in-depth information on graduates' employability development, perceived job quality in each job and employment-related outcomes. This examination of contemporary graduate careers by using mixed methods provides both depth (via interviews) and breadth (via primary and secondary survey data from larger samples) (Johnson & Turner, 2003) and, hence, stronger inferences due to the complementarity

and triangulation of research strategies in terms of content (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989) (See Figure 6.1 for a summary of research strategy).

This mixed methods strategy also provided strength in its temporal coverage. Secondary survey data uses data from graduates who have been in employment between 1996 and early 2003. Hence, some of the participants in this analysis have been in the labour market from the relatively early days corresponding to HE expansion in the UK. This also corresponds to a time in the UK when the employment rate has been steadily increasing (Gregg & Wadsworth, 2010). With the recent 2008 economic recession the UK economy, however, has witnessed the greatest loss in GDP, in comparison to previous economic recessions (Elsby & Smith, 2010; Gregg & Wadsworth, 2010). This *Great Recession* has had the most pronounced effect on unemployment of younger age groups (Bell & Blanchflower, 2010; Green, Mason & Unwin, 2011). For instance, major graduate recruiters have reduced their recruitment activity by 17 per cent between 2008 and 2009 and final year university students have been found to be pessimistic with regards to job hunting and career prospects after graduation (High Flyers Research, 2009). Career histories were also collected in 2009 and 2010 from graduates who received their first degree between 1998 and 2009. In this regard, some graduates' career histories refer to pre- and post-recession employment. The remainder of this chapter describes the methods and analyses used in operationalising the research framework.

Figure 6.1 Summary of the research strategy



Note. Phase I involves survey of 2009/2010 graduates and graduate interviews; Phase II involves Skills Survey 2006 and graduate interviews; and Phase III involves graduate interviews.

Phase I: Examining determinants of perceived employability via survey of 2009/2010 graduates

In understanding contemporary graduate careers, Phase I aimed to examine the factors associated with enhancing graduate employability and the extent to which this reflects a self-directed process. To this end, it tested the hypotheses that upon graduation from university, graduates' willingness (job and career preferences and self-esteem; H1) and opportunities (social and educational background; H2) will influence the extent to which they engage in CSM (career exploration, job search, networking and guidance seeking); and that CSM will directly (H4) and willingness and opportunities to engage in CSM will indirectly (H5) influence perceived employability. A survey instrument measuring job and career preferences, self-esteem, social and educational background, CSM (career exploration, job search, networking and guidance seeking) and perceived employability was developed to test these hypotheses. Data were collected from 433 graduates of the 2009 and 2010 cohorts (in the UK and in Scotland only, respectively).

Survey development

Development and administration of the survey consisted of three stages. The first stage involved a pre-test of the survey instrument with seven participants to ensure clarity of instructions, items and anchors used in the survey and the length of time it took on average to complete. This was conducted via behaviour coding (Fowler Jr & Cannell, 1996) where, different from the pilot and actual administration of the survey, the researcher was present while participants

completed the survey to observe directly any problems or questions that arose during administration. The second stage consisted of pilot administration of the survey instrument to 30 further participants. This aimed to ensure validity and reliability of measures used in the survey. Finally, based on the observations from the first two stages, stage three involved amendments to survey items and/or scales and administration of the survey instrument to 2009 (N= 241) and 2010 (N=192) graduating cohorts (see Appendix I for a copy of the survey of 2009/2010 graduates).

Sampling strategy

Pre-test sampling strategy involved convenience sampling of seven PhD researchers from universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde in 2009. The researcher's colleagues and friends were asked to take part in the study. Issues of representativeness were disregarded, because this stage only aimed to ensure the accuracy of measures.

Participants for the pilot testing stage of survey development were recruited through a departmental e-mail announcement sent to all Human Resource Management (HRM) graduates on behalf of the researcher by the HRM department secretary.

Actual data collection lasted from June 2009 until February 2010 for the 2009 cohort; and from June 2010 until November for the 2010 cohort. Due to data confidentiality issues it was impossible to obtain a full list of graduates in the UK to use as the sampling frame. Instead, the list of UK universities was used as the sampling frame, obtained from the Universities and Colleges Admission

Service (UCAS) website (<http://wwwucas.com>). The initial stage of data collection for the 2009 cohort consisted of contacting a random sample of alumni and careers services from the 149 universities listed on the UCAS website. At this initial stage, 25 alumni and careers service officers were asked to announce the survey via email and/or an announcement link on their websites and upcoming newsletters. One major obstacle in the data collection process was the upcoming Destinations Survey by the Higher Education Statistical Agency. Alumni and careers services officers were reluctant to announce the survey to recent graduates as this may cause survey fatigue. A further 25 random alumni and careers officers were contacted at a second stage. However, response rates for these two attempts were at five and seven per cent. Finally, all the remaining universities were contacted to increase the sample size. Eventually, 27 per cent of responses in this cohort were gathered via alumni service announcements; and a further 21 per cent from careers service announcements. This represents a 17 per cent response rate from all the universities contacted.

Alternative methods of data collection were sought to increase sample size. Thirty-two per cent of the responses were collected via announcing the survey on universities' alumni pages on social networks (i.e., Facebook and LinkedIn). The remainder of the responses were gathered via snowballing techniques as upon completion of the survey graduates were asked to recommend the survey to others who are eligible. Even though these alternative methods increased the sample size due to increased numbers of contacts (Cook, Heath, & Thompson,

2000), one major pitfall introduced with these methods was the impossibility of determining the response rate. Online surveys are typically known to have lower response rates when compared to mail surveys or telephone surveys (Bachmann, Elfrink, & Vazzana, 1996; Mehta & Sivadas, 1995), unless conducted in organisational settings (Schaefer & Dillman, 1998). This type of non-probability sampling certainly introduces biases in the conclusions drawn, yet a low response rate does not necessarily indicate that the survey suffers from non-response bias, as long as it is representative of the population under study (Krosnick, 1999). As described in the next section, the sample in this study largely mirrored the population characteristics reported by HESA in terms of sex, degree course completed and class of qualification achieved.

Data collection from the 2010 cohort followed a slightly different strategy. Having learnt the lesson on alumni and careers services officers' reluctance for announcement of the survey due to the upcoming Destinations Survey, graduates were approached as soon as they graduated from university by contacting Heads of Departments (HoDs). The data collection for 2010 cohort was limited to Scottish Universities due to time constraints. As before, the list of Scottish universities (N=17) was gathered from the UCAS website⁷. Email addresses for all HoDs across all faculties were gathered from the universities' websites. Overall, 216 HoDs in Scotland were asked to announce the survey via email on the researcher's behalf to their current graduates as the contact details

⁷ These universities are: University of Aberdeen, University of Abertay Dundee, University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh College of Art, Edinburgh Napier University, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, The Glasgow School of Art, Herriot-Watt University, Queen Margaret University, Robert Gordon University, University of St Andrews, University of Stirling, University of Strathclyde and University of West of Scotland.

are still available to them upon graduation. The majority of responses (79%) were gathered via departmental announcement of the survey, while the rest was gathered via careers service announcements (15%) and snowballing (i.e., asking participants upon completion of the survey to recommend the survey to others' who are eligible).

Due to the different methods used in sampling across the two cohorts, survey announcement (1=university announcement, via departmental, careers service or alumni email), cohort (1=2009), time elapsed between graduation and completion of the survey (in months) and university region (1=Scotland) were controlled in analyses.

Participants completed a self-administered online survey and were informed of the voluntary and anonymous nature of the study (see Appendix I for the participant information sheet and the survey completed). Average completion time was 16 minutes.

Sample description

Pre-pilot and pilot sample

Pre-pilot sample consisted of seven participants (5 female; mean age = 28). Pilot data were collected from 30 graduates of 2009 from the University of Strathclyde Business School (73% female; mean age = 22, SD=2 years).

2009 cohort

Data were collected from 241 participants in the UK (60% female; mean age=23, SD=3 years). Twenty-seven per cent had graduated from new

universities. The majority of graduates had social science degrees (34%), followed by science (22%), arts, creative arts and humanities (15%), business and administrative studies (15%) and engineering and building management (14%). Thirty-nine per cent had graduated with a 2:1 degree, followed by 1st class (28%), 2:2 (15%), ordinary (10%), pass (7%) and 3rd class (1%). Sixty-nine per cent had engaged in term-time work during university. The majority of graduates were from highly skilled families (55%), i.e., at least one parent working in managerial or professional occupations (see Table 6.1 for a description of the 2009 sample).

This distribution is similar to that of the general population of graduates from the 2008/09 cohort where 57 per cent of the graduates were female, 62 per cent had graduated with a 1st or 2:1 degree class, and the great majority of graduates were from science and engineering backgrounds (41%). The only notable difference in this sample is the oversampling in social science graduates, which is around 10 per cent in the actual graduate population, according to figures obtained from HESA website.

2010 cohort

Data were collected from 192 participants in Scotland (62% female; mean age=24, SD=3 years). Twenty-four per cent had graduated from post-1992 universities. The majority of graduates had received a degree in sciences (34%), followed by arts, creative arts and humanities (19%), business and administrative studies (19%), social sciences (16%) and engineering and building management (14%). Forty-seven per cent of participants had

graduated with a 2:1 degree, followed by 32 per cent with a 1st class and 13 per cent with 2:2. Sixty-seven per cent had engaged in term-time work during university education. The majority of participants were from highly skilled families (52%) (see Table 6.1 for a description of the 2010 sample).

This distribution is again similar to the distribution of the graduate population from the 2009/2010 cohort, where 57 per cent were female; the great majority had obtained science and engineering degrees 42 per cent. However, this distribution differs from the population in the oversampling of graduates with a 1st or upper second class degree, which was 73 per cent in the population distribution.

Overall sample

The overall sample consisted of 433 participants (61% female; mean age=23 (SD=3 years). Twenty-five per cent had graduated from pre-1992 universities. Overall, 27% had received a science degree, followed by social sciences (26%), arts, creative arts and humanities (17%), business and administrative studies (17%), and engineering and building management (14%). The majority of graduates had received a 2:1 degree (43%), followed by 1st (29%), and 2:2 (14%). Sixty-eight per cent had engaged in term-time work during university (see Table 6.1 for overall sample description).

It can be argued that this overall sample is fairly representative of the graduate populations of both 2009 and 2010, as there are slightly more females than males, the great majority of graduates have completed science and engineering

degrees and have graduated with first or upper second class degrees. Fifty-four per cent were from highly skilled families.

Table 6.1 Sample descriptions for the 2009, 2010 cohorts and overall sample

	Cohort		
	2009	2010	Both
Age (M, (SD))	23 (3)	24 (3)	23 (3)
Female	60%	62%	61%
New university	27%	24%	25%
Term-time work	69%	67%	68%
<i>Degree subject</i>			
Arts, creative arts and humanities	15%	19%	17%
Business and administrative studies	15%	19%	17%
Engineering and building management	14%	13%	14%
Sciences	22%	34%	27%
Social sciences	34%	16%	26%
<i>Degree class</i>			
1st	28%	32%	29%
2:1	39%	47%	43%
2:2	15%	13%	14%
3rd	1%	1%	10%
Pass	7%	3%	5%
Ordinary	11%	5%	8%
<i>Mother's education</i>			
No qualifications	13%	8%	11%
High school or equivalent	49%	51%	50%
University degree	26%	28%	27%
Postgraduate degree/professional qualifications	9%	9%	9%
Don't know	3%	4%	3%
<i>Father's education</i>			
No qualifications	16%	13%	15%
High school or equivalent	36%	35%	36%
University degree	30%	31%	30%
Postgraduate degree/professional qualifications	14%	15%	15%
Don't know	4%	6%	4%
<i>Mother's occupation</i>			
Low skilled	45%	39%	42%
Intermediate skilled	17%	21%	19%
Highly skilled	38%	40%	39%
<i>Father's occupation</i>			
Low skilled	18%	21%	19%
Intermediate skilled	27%	28%	28%
Highly skilled	55%	51%	53%

Comparisons of cohorts suggested that there were no significant differences in terms of age, sex, university type, degree class, term-time work and social background; but the cohorts were significantly different in terms of degree subjects studied ($\beta=1.74$, $p<.05$). Graduates from the 2009 cohort were significantly more likely to have completed non-professional degrees in comparison to those from the 2010 cohort, this was possibly an artefact of the sampling strategy (see Appendix II for binomial regression analyses with cohort as the dependent variable).

Survey measures

The survey measures consisted of: job attribute preferences; career preferences; self-esteem; social and educational background; CSM; perceived employability; and other demographics (see Appendix I for a copy of the survey).

Job attribute preferences

Job preferences were measured using a multiple-response question: "Below are some of the things people look for in a job. In your job search, which one(s) are you particularly looking for? (please select as appropriate)". The response set for this item was taken from the 15 job preferences used in the Skills Survey 2006 dataset (e.g., Good promotion prospects, good pay and good relations with supervisor or manager). Job attributes were categorised into two using Sutherland's (2011) criteria: Extrinsic (i.e., promotion opportunities; pay; job security; convenient work hours; choice over work hours; fringe benefits; and training and development opportunities, $\alpha=.75$) and intrinsic (i.e., good

relations with supervisor or manager; a job where you can use your initiative; work you like doing; an easy workload; good physical working conditions; a lot of variety in the type of work; and friendly people to work with, $\alpha=.85$). Total scores were calculated for each job preference category. As observed in Appendix II there were no significant differences between cohorts on any of the job attribute preferences. Moreover, a comparison of mean extrinsic ($F(7,432)=.56, p>.05$) and intrinsic ($F(9,432)=.90, p>.05$) job attribute preferences has suggested that there were no significant differences between cohorts on the overall measures.

Career preferences

Career preferences were measured using 23 items from King (2003), where participants were asked to indicate how important each item is for their career on a five-point scale (1=not important at all, 5=extremely important). King's original study revealed seven factors corresponding to: traditional; employability; multiple company; balance; entrepreneurial; immediate gratification; and professional preferences. However, based on the feedback from the pre-pilot study participants that there were no clear distinction between some (e.g., employability and multiple company) preference categories, this section was presented in four different parts: (i) traditional career (five items, e.g., "You work your way up through the ranks of a well-known company"; $\alpha=.70$); (ii) work-family balance (six items, e.g., "You save your energy and effort for things outside work"; $\alpha=.81$); (iii) boundaryless career (nine items, e.g., "You acquire skills that can be applied in many different

work contexts”; $\alpha=.91$); and (iv) entrepreneurial preferences (three items, e.g., “You work for other people until you have enough experience to work for yourself”; $\alpha=.89$). An average score was calculated for each preference. Graduates from the 2009 cohort were more likely to have a preference for traditional ($t(431)=2.68$, $p<.05$) and entrepreneurial careers ($t(431)=2.07$, $p<.05$) in comparison to those from 2010 cohort.

Self-esteem

Rosenberg’s Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1979) was used (10 items; 4-point scale, 1=strongly disagree, 4=strongly agree; e.g., “I feel that I have a number of good qualities”). Items 2, 5, 6, 8 and 9 were reverse coded. Rosenberg (1979) reported that the internal consistency coefficient for the scale was between .85 and .88. Similarly, the internal consistency coefficients in this study were .87 and .90 for the 2009 and 2010 cohorts, respectively.

Social and educational background

Social background was measured by graduates’ parents’ education level and occupation. Mother’s and father’s education was measured with two items (one for each) asking graduates to select the appropriate level of education from a list of five: (1=no qualifications, 2=high school or equivalent; 3=university; 4=postgraduate degree, 5=don’t know). Parents’ occupation was measured using the nine SOC2000 major occupation categories (1=managers, 9=elementary occupations). For the sake of parsimony, dummy variables were created for education (1=at least one parent is at least university educated) and

occupation (1=at least one parent is in highly skilled work (i.e., managerial/professional occupations).

Educational background information was gathered by asking university, degree subject, degree class, term-time work (0=No, 1=Yes) and work-related experiences beyond term-time work (0=No, 1=Yes). The list of universities and degree courses was gathered from the UCAS website. University was recoded to a dummy variable to reflect new (1) and old (0) universities. Degree subjects were first coded to five main groups: arts, creative arts and humanities; business and administrative studies; engineering; sciences; and social sciences based on HECSU's (2010, 2011) reports. This was then dummy coded to reflect non-professional (e.g., arts, creative arts and humanities); business and related (e.g., business and administrative studies) and professional degree subjects (e.g., sciences) for parsimony in analysis. Degree class was also dummy coded (1=1st/2:1).

Career self-management

Four different measures were used to operationalise CSM: career exploration (environment and self exploration); job search, networking and guidance seeking.

Career exploration was measured using the environment and self-exploration subscales of the Career Exploration Scale (CES; Stumpf, Colarelli, & Hartman, 1983). Stumpf et al. (1983) conceptualise environment exploration as "the extent of career exploration regarding occupations, jobs, and organizations within the last 3 months" (six items; e.g., "investigated career possibilities") and

self-exploration as “the extent of career exploration involving self-assessment and retrospection within the last 3 months” (p.196) (five items; e.g., focused my thoughts on me as a person”). In the original scale, respondents are asked to think over the last three months and indicate the extent to which they have engaged in each of the behaviours on a 5-point Likert scale (1=little, 2=somewhat, 3=a moderate amount, 4=a substantial amount, 5=a great deal). In the present study, respondents were asked “to think over the last few months”. This was because the sample was approached soon after their graduation ceremonies and before the ceremony they were preoccupied with final examinations and projects, and may not necessarily have concentrated on their careers. Moreover, the feedback from the pre-pilot study was that the distinction between the anchors was not clear; there were no meaningful differences between 4 (a substantial amount) and 5 (a great deal), and also between 1 (little) and 2 (somewhat). In light of this, the anchors were changed so that they would indicate the frequency of engagement in each of the behaviours listed (1=never, 2=rarely, 3=moderately, 4=frequently, 5=very frequently). The internal consistencies for environment exploration and self-exploration subscales were reported by Stumpf et al. (1983) to range between .83 and .88, and .87 and .88, respectively. The internal consistency coefficients for the environment exploration and self-exploration subscales were .86 and .87 for the 2009 cohort; and .84 and .90 for the 2010 cohort, respectively.

Job search was measured using the Job Search Self-Efficacy scale (JSSE; Ellis & Taylor, 1983) which contains 10 items and is commonly used to assess

individuals' beliefs in their job search abilities (5-point scale; 1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). The first item on the scale "In general, I'm not very good at impressing potential employers with my qualifications" was placed fourth in this study, so that the first item would be a positive one "I know a lot more than most students about how to use a wide range of job opportunity sources" and would not offend or put off respondents at the onset of the scale. Items with negative connotations were reversed coded. Internal consistency coefficients reported by Ellis and Taylor (1983) were between .82 and .83. The reliability coefficients for this study were .83 and .87 for 2009 and 2010 samples, respectively.

Networking was measured using the 8-item Networking Comfort Scale (Wanberg, Kanfer, & Banas, 2000). A sample item from this scale is "I am comfortable asking my friends for advice regarding my job search" (5-point scale, 1-strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). Items 2, 5, 7 and 8 were reverse coded items. The internal consistency coefficient reported by Wanberg et al. (2000) was .79; whereas it was .80 and .81 in this study, for the 2009 and 2010 cohorts, respectively.

Guidance seeking was measured by asking whether the graduate has received any guidance in making career decisions (1) or not (0), then six options were presented to select as appropriate: careers advisors, academic advisors, professional contacts in the graduate's academic field, other professional contacts, parents and friends. A total guidance score was computed.

The CFA analysis suggested that the proposed five-factor structure fit the data well ($\chi^2/df=3.37$, $GFI=.90$, $CFI=.90$, $RMSEA=.07$). An invariance analysis was conducted on the indicator variables of CSM to ensure that the measures are referring to the same construct across cohorts. This analysis suggested that the constructs hold similarly for both cohorts ($\Delta\chi^2= 78.31$, $\Delta df=66$, $p>.05$).

Perceived employability

Rothwell, Herbert and Rothwell's (2007) self-perceived employability scale for university students was used (16 items; 5-point scale; 1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree; e.g., "Employers are eager to employ graduates from my university."). Rothwell et al. (2007) identified four factors to employability perceptions: (1) subject - related; (2) outward - facing; (3) individual attributes; and (4) engagement with studies and academic performance, and reported $\alpha=.75$. CFA suggested that the four factor structure applied similarly across cohorts ($\Delta\chi^2= 137.98$, $\Delta df=116$, $p>.05$). Internal consistency of this scale for 2009 and 2010 cohorts were .88 and .85, respectively.

Control variables

Control variables included age, sex (1=Female, 2=Male), cohort (1=2009, 2=2010), time elapsed between graduation and completion of the survey, how the participants heard about the survey (1=University announcement (i.e., through careers service, alumni office or departmental announcement)) and university region (1=Scotland). Table 6.2 describes the means, standard deviations and bivariate correlations between the variables in the survey.

Table 6.2 Means, standard deviations and bivariate correlations for online survey measures (N=433)

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 Age	26.41	8.31	—											
2 Male	1.39	.49	.01	—										
3 2010 Cohort	1.44	.50	-.16**	-.02	—									
4 Time after graduation	2.30	2.69	.05	.01	-.66**	—								
5 University announcement	.75	.43	.11*	-.09	.48**	-.49**	—							
6 Scottish university	.71	.45	.01	.01	.58**	-.60**	.40**	—						
7 Parents' education	.52	.50	-.22**	.02	.02	-.07	.02	.00	—					
8 Parents' occupation	.63	.48	-.23**	.01	-.03	.02	-.02	-.08	.41**	—				
9 New university	.24	.43	.20**	-.04	-.03	.15**	-.14**	-.36*	-.10*	-.10*	—			
10 Business subject ^a	.15	.36	-.10*	.11*	.06	.04	-.05	.05	-.05	.03	-.01	—		
11 Professional subject ^a	.38	.49	-.06	.18**	.11*	-.10*	.03	.08	.11*	-.08	-.02	-.34**	—	
12 1st/2:1 degree class	.73	.44	-.18**	.08	.11*	-.01	-.05	.00	-.04	.10*	-.08	.07	-.04	—
13 Term-time work	.70	.46	-.01	-.02	-.03	-.02	-.03	.09	-.13**	-.07	-.02	.15**	-.07	-.04
14 Work experience	.23	.42	.17**	.04	-.07	.01	.01	.05	-.08	-.14**	.01	.04	.00	-.13**
15 Extrinsic job preferences	1.19	1.60	-.01	.03	.01	.06	.04	-.09	-.06	-.02	.10*	.10*	-.11*	-.08
16 Intrinsic job preferences	1.79	2.32	.06	.03	-.01	.06	.07	-.10*	-.05	-.04	.12*	.03	-.14**	-.13**
17 Environment exploration	3.25	.85	-.10*	-.01	-.10*	.16**	-.12*	-.15**	.01	-.05	.04	-.01	-.01	-.01
18 Self-exploration	3.39	.89	.09	-.05	-.15**	.11*	-.06	-.07	-.06	-.09	.09	.02	-.17**	-.12*
19 Job search	3.53	.63	.17**	-.02	-.16**	.06	-.12*	.02	-.10*	-.13**	.01	.03	-.04	-.03
20 Networking	3.61	.63	.13**	.06	-.04	-.11*	.04	.06	-.03	.00	-.07	.02	-.07	-.06
21 Guidance seeking	1.61	1.72	-.17**	.03	.02	-.02	-.02	-.02	.15**	.02	-.09	.00	.06	.09
22 Self-esteem	3.03	.49	.08	.12*	-.03	-.03	-.01	.12*	-.08	-.04	-.05	.12*	.03	.02
23 Perceived employability	3.35	.57	.06	.07	-.01	-.03	-.01	.17**	-.06	-.07	-.12*	.05	.12**	.04

Note. Data source: Survey of 2009/2010 graduates; ^a Comparison category = non-professional degree subject; * p<.05, ** p<.01.

Table 6.2 continued...

	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
13 Term-time work	—										
14 Work experience	.36**	—									
15 Extrinsic job preferences	.08	.01	—								
16 Intrinsic job preferences	.04	.02	.78**	—							
17 Environment exploration	-.07	.04	.14**	.16**	—						
18 Self-exploration	.04	.18**	.04	.12*	.37**	—					
19 Job search	.07	.16**	-.16**	-.15**	.30**	.14**	—				
20 Networking	.05	.11*	-.14**	-.11*	.13**	.12*	.44**	—			
21 Guidance seeking	.03	.14**	-.04	-.05	.19**	.01	.12*	.22**	—		
22 Self-esteem	-.03	.14**	-.14**	-.16**	.15**	-.03	.56**	.44**	.14**	—	
23 Perceived employability	-.10*	.05	-.08	-.08	.26**	.11*	.56**	.31**	.23**	.44**	—

Note. Data source: Survey of 2009/2010 graduates; * p<.05, ** p<.01.

Phase II: Examining the occupational boundaries of the graduate labour market via secondary data analysis

In understanding contemporary graduate careers, Phase II aimed to examine the occupational boundaries within which graduate careers develop. To this end, it tested the hypotheses that 'emerging' graduate occupations differ from traditional and non-graduate occupations in job quality (H5) and in employment-related outcomes (H6); and that for graduates, intrinsic features of work have a greater impact on employment-related outcomes in comparison to extrinsic features of work. Hypothesis testing in Phase II involved a systematic examination of graduate occupations and, hence, required an occupational level of analysis using nationally representative data from the UK graduate workforce. Therefore, secondary data analysis is chosen to be the appropriate strategy for this second phase of research. As opposed to primary data analysis where data collection is guided by the specific aims of the research project (as in Phase I), secondary data analysis makes use of data that are collected for some other primary research purpose (Castle, 2003; Hair, Babin, Money, & Samouel, 2003). Therefore, one major disadvantage of secondary data analysis is that the researcher does not have control over the data collection process: the target population, sampling design and measures used (Hair et al., 2003). Two major advantages of secondary data analysis, on the other hand, are that it is cost- and time- effective. Castle (2003) recommends that secondary data analysis should be used only when (i) the research participants; (ii) measurement and (iii) operationalisation of variables; and (iv) the context of the original data fits with the objectives of the research at hand. The dataset

(i.e., Skills Survey 2006⁸ (SS06; Green, Gallie, Zhou & Felstead, 2008)) chosen for this analysis aims at examining the job and skill requirements in Britain, and the extent to which the workforce feels that their knowledge and skills match that of the job requirements. This, therefore, fits well with the purpose of understanding the occupational boundaries of the GLM.

Measures used from the SS06 in Phase II were: graduate occupations, job quality (i.e., job complexity, gradueness skills, perceived skill use, opportunity for skill use, task discretion, work intensity, training and development, job security and pay), and employment-related outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction, organisational commitment, career satisfaction, perceived availability of alternatives, work related affective well-being and negative carry-over from work). The graduate sample from SS06 used in this analysis consisted of 488 participants with three to 10 years of work experience.

Sample description

SS06 targeted the 20 – 65 (inclusive) age groups in paid work (at least one hour per week) in the UK. Total sample consisted of 7787 employees. The net response rate for the SS06 was 56% (see BMRB (2006) for more information on the sampling strategy). The sample in this study was restricted to participants who hold a university degree and who are in the first three to 10 years of their careers post-graduation. This restriction resulted in 488 respondents in the

⁸ SS06 conducted as the third in the series of Skills Surveys (1997, 2001) and was sponsored by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Research Centre on Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance (SKOPE), Department for Education and Skills (DfES), Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA), Education and Learning Wales (ELWa), Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA) and Department for Employment and Learning (DEL).

sample (46% male; mean age=31, SD=5 years). Sample was restricted on work experience for three reasons. Firstly, research suggesting temporality of underemployment commonly examines destinations three to five years post-graduation. Limiting the sample to those with at least five years of work experience would restrict the sample size even further; therefore, three years was chosen. Secondly, the first few years of employment are argued to be the socialisation period where individuals are still developing an understanding of the accepted norms and behaviours, and therefore, their perceptions of work and their attitudes may fluctuate during this period (Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). Lastly, 10 years of work experience was chosen to limit analysis to those in early- to mid- careers, as during the three- to ten-year period career anchors may stay relatively stable (Schein, 1974). On average, graduates had seven years of work experience (SD=2) and three and a half years of organisational tenure (SD=4). The great majority of graduates had full-time work (83%) and permanent contracts (87%). In terms of occupation, 51 per cent were employed as managers or professionals, and 25 per cent in associate professional occupations. Forty-eight per cent were employed in the private sector (see Table 6.3 for sample characteristics across occupations).

Table 6.3 Description of sample characteristics across SOC2000 occupations (N=488)

	Managerial	Professional	Asst. Professional	Administrative & secretarial	Other low skilled ^a	Total
Age ^f	31.37 (4.31)	31.60 (4.63)	29.85 (4.10)	30.10 (5.87)	30.77 (5.44)	30.85 (4.75)
Female	42.90%	55.20%	59.00%	57.10%	52.90%	53.90%
Work experience ^f	7.39 (2.16)	7.36 (2.29)	6.79 (2.39)	6.61 (2.53)	6.41 (2.28)	7.01 (2.34)
Organisational tenure ^f	4.32 (5.88)	3.85 (2.87)	3.16 (2.84)	3.10 (3.84)	2.71 (3.16)	3.52 (3.71)
Organisational size ^f	304.02 (676.02)	315.87 (622.42)	716.46 (2989.16)	754.223 (2544.65)	439.77 (1778.02)	474.09 (1878.01)
Private sector	67.90%	37.40%	36.90%	61.20%	58.60%	48%
SPV responsibility	69.05%	44.79%	44.26%	38.78%	2.00%	44.70%
New university	58.30%	52.10%	59.00%	65.30%	7.00%	58.80%
PG qualification	27.40%	31.30%	22.10%	1.20%	17.10%	24.20%
First/2:2 degree class	53.60%	58.30%	54.10%	46.90%	32.90%	51.60%
<i>Degree subject</i>						
Social science ^b	45.20%	31.30%	45.90%	57.10%	31.40%	40%
Law and medicine	3.60%	8.60%	4.90%	2.00%	4.30%	5.50%
Science ^c	19.00%	29.40%	2.50%	16.30%	21.40%	23%
Other ^d	32.20%	3.70%	28.70%	24.60%	42.90%	31.50%
<i>Maths qualification</i>						
A Levels	4.51%	39.74%	32.46%	39.58%	3.30%	36.70%
O Levels	5.63%	48.72%	5.00%	58.33%	51.52%	5.80%
Other ^e	8.86 %	11.54 %	17.54%	2.08%	18.19%	13.30 %
<i>Early financial difficulty</i>						
Very /quite easy	33.33%	26.38%	3.33%	24.49%	41.43%	3.60%
Neither easy nor difficult	29.76%	38.04%	32.79%	28.57%	34.29%	33.80%
Very/quite difficult	36.90%	35.58%	36.89%	46.94%	24.29%	35.70%
TOTAL	17.20%	33.40%	25.00%	10.10%	14.30%	100.00%

Note. Data source: Skills Survey 2006; ^a Other low skilled occupations include: Skilled trades (3.1%), personal service occupations (5.1%), sales occupations (2.5%), machine operatives (1.8%) and elementary occupations (1.8%); ^b Social sciences: Arts, humanities, social sciences and business and management studies; ^c Sciences: Sciences, engineering, mathematics and computing; ^d Other degree subject: Degree subjects other than those cited under social science, law, medicine and science; ^e Other maths qualification: GCSE grade d-g or below, foreign awarding body or maths included as part of another qualification; ^f descriptives refer to (Mean (St. Dev)).

Measures

Main measures used from SS06 were: graduate occupations, job quality (i.e., job complexity, gradueness skills, perceived skill use, opportunity for skill use, task discretion, work intensity, training and development, job security, and wages) and employment-related outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction, organisational commitment, career satisfaction, perceived availability of alternatives, work-related affective well-being and negative carry-over from work).

Graduate occupations

The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC2000) in the UK was used to operationalise graduate occupations. This classification distinguishes between the *job* and *skill* and defines jobs as the “set of tasks or duties to be carried out by one person” (ONS, 2000, p.4), while skill is defined as the ability to carry out tasks and duties on a job in a competent, thorough and efficient manner (Elias, McKnight, & Kinshott, 1999). Jobs are classified into *skill level* and *skill specialisation*. The latter refers to the field of knowledge a person has to be competent in. Skill level refers to the complexity of the tasks to be carried out and is related to the time necessary for a person to become competent on the job. Skill level is, therefore, linked closely with the formal qualifications necessary to do the job well and/or the required amount of work-based training.

There are four broad categories of skills in SOC2000 and occupations are hierarchically classified according to these categories. Level 1 (elementary occupations), corresponds to completion of general compulsory education, with

no specific qualifications required, except for some work-related and health and safety training. Level 2 occupations (administrative and secretarial; personal service; and sales and customer service occupations; and process, plant and machine operatives) usually require completion of compulsory education plus a longer period of work-related training or experience compared to Level 1 occupations. Level 3 (associate professional and technical occupations, and skilled trades), requires knowledge acquired through post-compulsory education but not to degree level or significant amount of work experience. Finally, Level 4 (professional and managerial occupations), requires degree level qualifications or equivalent amount of work experience (ONS, 2000).

SS06 collects participants' job titles, which are then recorded according to SOC2000 categories. Traditional graduate occupations were operationalised to be those that require Level 4 skills, while 'emerging' graduate occupations were operationalised to be those requiring Level 3 skills. Within the intermediate skilled occupations, only associate professional occupations were labelled 'emerging' graduate occupations, as this is shown to be the area of work that has been graduatised recently (Anderson, 2009). The rest of the categories were taken to reflect non-graduate occupations and was divided into administrative and secretarial occupations and other low skilled work categories. Five dummy variables were created to reflect: Managerial; professional; associate professional; administrative/secretarial; and other low skilled occupations.

Within traditional occupations, graduates were commonly employed as teaching professionals (25%) and functional managers (15%). Business and finance associate professionals (14%), health associate professionals (12%) and sales and related associate professionals (12%) were the most common occupations within the 'emerging' occupations. Finance administration (13%) was the most common non-graduate occupation (see Appendix III).

Job quality

Nine different indicators of job quality were used: job complexity; gradueness skills; perceived skill utilisation, opportunity for skill use; task discretion; work intensity; training and development; job security; and wages. *Job complexity* was included to replicate Felstead et al.'s (2007) findings on broad skills and to provide description of the general differences between graduate occupations. Felstead et al.'s (2007) original analysis included qualification required to get the job ("if they were applying today, what qualifications, if any, would someone need to get the type of job you have now?"), time to learn the job ("How long did it take for you, after you first started doing this type of job, to learn to do it well?") and the total length of training required to do the job. Qualifications required to do the job ("How necessary do you think it is to possess those qualifications to do your job competently?"; 4-point scale, 1=totally unnecessary, 4=essential) was also included in this analysis. The focus on this analysis is on the requirement of a university degree to get and do the job, therefore, qualification required to get the job was dummy coded where 1 equals university or post-graduate degree and 0 equals all other degrees.

The second indicator of job quality was *graduateness skills*. SS06 contains a detailed job analysis with 48 questions on the importance of various tasks in the person's job. The instructions for this block read "You will now be asked about different activities which may or may not be part of your job. We are interested in finding out what activities your job involves and how important these are" (5-point scale; 1 = essential, 5 = not at all important / does not apply). Items were reverse coded so that higher scores indicate higher importance (1=not at all important/does not apply, 5=essential). Felstead et al. (2007) report 12 different factors from this analysis, seven of which (which correspond to 'graduateness' as defined by HEQC (1996)) are included in this analysis: Literacy (6 items, e.g., "reading long documents, such as long reports, manuals, articles or books, $\alpha=.86$); number (3 items, e.g., "calculations using decimals, percentages or fractions" $\alpha=.87$); influence (5 items, e.g., "persuading or influencing others", $\alpha=.72$); planning (4 items, e.g., "planning your own activities, $\alpha=.78$); client communication (4 items, e.g., "counselling, advising or caring for customers or clients", $\alpha=.69$); horizontal communication (2 items, e.g., "working with a team of people", $\alpha=.79$); and problem solving (5 items, e.g., "spotting problems or faults", $\alpha=.87$). A computer use skill variable (3 items, e.g., using a computer, PC or other types of computerised equipment", $\alpha=.70$) was added to this list, as this reflects the changing world of work with the advancement of ICTs.

These eight skills were only used in the comparisons between graduate occupations. For the sake of parsimony, an overall graduateness skill score was

calculated and used in the analyses examining the relationships between job quality and employment-related outcomes. Internal consistency coefficient for this measure was .76. A confirmatory factor analysis with the eight gradueness skills revealed reasonable fit with the data ($\chi^2/df=5.58$, $p<.05$, CFI=.89, TLI=.90, RMSEA=.06).

Perceived skill utilisation was measured with a single item 'How much of your past experience, skill and abilities can you make use of in your present job?' (four-point scale; 1=very little, 4=almost all). This item also corresponds to the measure of skill utilisation used by Green and colleagues (Green & McIntosh, 2007; Green & Zhu, 2010).

Opportunity for skill use was measured with a single item: 'In my current job I have enough opportunity to use the knowledge and skills that I have' (four-point scale; 1=strongly agree, 4=strongly disagree). This was recoded such that a higher score indicates higher skill use opportunity.

Task discretion was measured with four items, similar to Felstead et al.'s (2007) analysis. Respondents were asked to indicate how much influence they personally have on (i) how hard they work; (ii) deciding what tasks they are to do; (iii) deciding how they are to do the task; and (iv) deciding the quality standards to which they work (4-point scale; 1=a great deal, 4=none at all). Responses for each item were reverse coded so that higher scores indicated higher task discretion (1=none at all, 4=a great deal; $\alpha = .79$). An average task discretion score was calculated.

Work intensity was measured with four items: Extra effort put into job beyond what is required (1=a lot, 4=none); job requires hard work (1=strongly agree, 4=strongly disagree); frequency of high speed work and deadlines (1=never, 7=all the time). Each item was reverse coded and standardised so that higher scores indicate higher work intensity ($\alpha=.71$). An average intensity score was calculated.

Training and development was measured with eight items. Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent were the various activities (e.g., "Doing this job or similar work on a regular basis"; "Watching and listening to others at work or being shown by others while you work"; "Doing a training course with the current employer, away from the usual place of work") helpful in developing the skills and knowledge needed to do the job. Five-point response scale was used (1=a great deal of help, 5=of no help at all; $\alpha=.74$). All items were reverse coded so that higher scores indicate higher training and development. An average training and development score was calculated.

Perceived job security was measured with a single item: "Do you think there is any chance at all of you losing your job and becoming unemployed in the next twelve months?" (0=yes, 1=no).

Pay was measured using the gross pay before deductions for tax, national insurance and before any tax credits which the person may receive.

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)⁹ has revealed that job quality measured with nine factors was a good fit with the data ($\chi^2/df=4.12$, TLI=.90, CFI=.95, RMSEA=.04).

Employment-related outcomes

Job Satisfaction was measured as the mean of 14 job facet items, such as promotion prospects; pay; relations with supervisor or manager; job security; and the opportunity to use abilities (seven-point scale; 1=completely satisfied, 7=completely dissatisfied). Each item was reverse coded so that higher scores indicate higher satisfaction (1= completely dissatisfied, 7= completely satisfied; $\alpha = .89$). An overall average job satisfaction score was calculated.

Organisational commitment was measured as the mean of seven items (four-point scale, 1=strongly agree, 4=strongly disagree; e.g., "I am willing to work harder than I have to in order to help this organisation succeed."). The items were reverse coded so that higher scores indicate higher organisational commitment (1=strongly disagree, 4=strongly agree; $\alpha = .83$).

Career satisfaction was measured with a single item: "Thinking back to when you first started work, would you say that so far in your working life you have done..." (six-point scale, 1=much better than you expected; 6=much less well than you expected). This was reverse coded so that higher scores indicate higher satisfaction.

⁹ The nine measures were standardised for the purpose of CFA as each measure uses a different scale.

Well-being was measured using 15 items from Warr (1990) reflecting (a) work-related affective well-being (12 items; e.g., contented, miserable; $\alpha=.85$); and (b) negative carry-over from work to home (3 items; e.g., 'I feel used up at the end of a workday', $\alpha=.87$) and the question 'Thinking of the past few weeks, how much of the time has your job made you feel each of the following...' (six-point scale, 1=never, 6=all of the time). Items that connote negative work-related affective well-being (e.g., miserable and tense) were reverse coded so that higher scores indicate higher well-being. Average scores of well-being and negative carry-over were calculated.

Perceived availability of job alternatives was measured with a single item: If you were looking for work today, how easy or difficult do you think it would be for you to find as good a job as your current one? (4-point scale; 1=very easy, 4=very difficult). This item was reverse coded so that higher scores indicate higher perceived availability of alternatives.

Control variables

Age, sex (1=Male, 2=Female), university type (1=old university), degree subject (1=professional degree courses), degree class (1=1st/2:1 degree classification), highest math qualification (continuous variable; 7=A levels of higher, 1=no coded qualifications), post-graduate qualifications (1=yes, 0=no), sector (1=private sector, 0=public/voluntary sector), years of work experience since leaving full-time education, organisational tenure, supervisory responsibility on the job (1=yes, 0=no) and social background were controlled in the analyses. Social background was measured with a proxy item: Thinking about the

financial situation at home when you were a child, how difficult would you say it was? (1=very difficult, 5=very easy). SS06 offers a socio-economic classification variable. However, this is the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC), which is determined according to one's occupation. This variable was not used in this study as it confounds the analyses based on graduates' occupational differences. Contract type and job status were not controlled for as the majority of graduates held permanent full-time jobs. Table 6.4 describes the bivariate correlations between the main variables used in this study.

Table 6.4 Bivariate correlations for variables from SS06 (N=488)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Age	—	.05	.52*	.19*	.01	.03	-.15*	.19*	-.06	.03	-.02	.04	-.08
2 Female		—	.06	.04	-.13*	.00	-.22*	.04	.05	-.08	-.19*	.08	-.01
3 Work experience			—	.26*	.04	.08	-.03	-.01	-.02	.04	-.01	-.01	-.01
4 Organisational tenure				—	-.03	.18*	-.04	.03	-.04	-.06	.03	.01	-.03
5 Organisation size					—	.06	-.02	-.03	.04	.05	.08	.05	-.03
6 Supervisory responsibility						—	.05	.03	.03	-.01	.04	.11*	-.04
7 Private sector							—	-.14*	.01	.00	.05	-.03	.01*
8 PG qualification								—	-.02	.08	-.08	.01	-.07
9 Maths qualification									—	-.13*	.02	.04	.01
10 New university										—	-.17*	-.19*	-.06
11 Professional degree subject											—	.12*	.04
12 First/2:1 degree class												—	.00
13 Social background													—

Note. Data source: Skills Survey 2006; * p<.05, ** p<.01, ***p<.001.

Table 6.4 continued...

	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
1 Age	.05	.11*	-.05	-.01	.09	.09*	-.11*	.08	.02	.04	-.06	.02	.03	.01	-.05
2 Female	-.10*	.02	.02	-.01	-.03	.00	.01	.00	.08	-.01	-.08	-.02	.04	.10*	.02
3 Work experience	.08	.11*	-.10*	-.10*	.15*	.06	-.02	.18*	.04	.13*	-.14*	.14*	.08	.10*	.13*
4 Organisational tenure	.10*	.06	-.04	-.09	.07	.04	-.06	.18*	-.07	.08	.08	.05	.03	.01	.02
5 Organisation size	-.04	-.06	.05	-.01	.08	-.01	.02	.02	.04	.05	.02	-.02	.07	.01	.09
6 Supervisory responsibility	.22*	.00	-.04	-.20*	.17*	.04	.03	.15*	.05	.19*	-.16*	.14*	.06	.13*	.12*
7 Private sector	.18*	-.15*	.09	.09	-.04	-.08	-.09*	-.13*	-.19*	-.10*	.12*	-.10*	-.06	-.07	-.13*
8 PG qualification	.03	.12*	-.11*	-.07	.15*	.44*	.00	.02	-.08	.04	.03	.03	-.01	-.09*	-.04
9 Maths qualification	.05	-.03	.09	-.03	.02	.00	-.07	.01	.08	.04	.04	.05	.02	.04	-.04
10 New university	-.01	-.09*	.04	.09*	-.05	.01	.01	-.06	-.05	.04	-.01	.00	.06	-.02	.05
11 Professional degree subject	-.06	.15*	-.08	-.03	.10*	.06	.02	.08	-.03	.02	-.01	-.04	-.04	-.01	.06
12 First/2:1 degree class	.02	.09*	-.03	-.15*	.09	.00	.06	.07	-.06	.14*	-.12*	.06	.13*	.17*	.04
13 Social background	-.02	.05	.08	-.13*	.02	.00	.00	.00	-.05	.02	-.08	.06	-.01	.08	.07
14 Managerial	—	-.32*	-.15*	-.19*	.07	-.03	-.07	-.04	-.16*	.03	.03	.03	.00	.02	-.10*
15 Professional		—	-.24*	-.29*	.26*	.18*	.18**	.27*	.10	.16*	-.23*	.19*	-.01	.08	.17*
16 Admin/secretarial			—	-.14*	-.19*	-.09*	-.10*	-.11*	.07	.05	.13*	-.10*	.03	-.01	.03
17 Other low skilled				—	-.27*	-.10*	-.10*	-.26*	-.10	-.23*	.22*	-.25*	-.12*	-.15*	-.24*
18 Get job: Uni degree					—	.32*	.02	.19*	.06	.17*	-.24*	.24*	.05	.06	.14*
19 Get job: PG degree						—	.07	.08	.01	.12*	-.07	.12*	.04	-.10*	.07
20 Do job: Uni degree							—	.13**	.17**	.05	-.21**	.10*	.10*	.07	.15**
21 Time to learn the job								—	.22*	.22*	-.23*	.31*	.05	.19*	.27*
22 Total training to learn the job									—	.10	-.05	.06	-.02	.13*	.16*
23 Graduateness										—	-.20*	.25*	.27*	.42*	.59*
24 Perceived skill use											—	.23*	-.12*	-.18*	-.33*
25 Opportunity for skill use												—	.18*	.18*	.31*
26 Task discretion													—	.18*	.21*
27 Work intensity														—	.30*
28 T&D															—

Note. Data source: Skills Survey 2006; * p<.05, ** p<.01, ***p<.001.

Table 6.4 continued...

	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
1 Age	.01	.05	-.16*	.03	.06	.03	.08	-.07
2 Female	-.01	-.05	-.06	-.05	.03	-.06	-.16*	.16*
3 Work experience	.09	.08	-.07	.10*	.10*	.12*	.02	-.02
4 Organisational tenure	.10*	.04	-.08	.02	-.08	.04	-.03	-.01
5 Organisation size	.01	.03	.01	.04	-.01	.04	.02	-.06
6 Supervisory respn	.04	.21*	-.01	.11*	.08	.13*	-.02	.13*
7 Private sector	-.06	-.08	.15*	.02	.05	.02	.02	-.08
8 PG qualification	-.11*	.00	-.06	-.02	.00	.00	-.02	.02
9 Maths qualification	.04	.11*	.09*	-.01	-.08	.00	.01	.02
10 New university	.01	-.06	.00	.03	.05	.11*	.05	-.08
11 Professional degree subject	-.01	.08	.07	-.02	-.04	.03	-.02	-.04
12 First/2:1 degree class	.00	.09*	-.01	.00	.05	.10*	-.07	.04
13 Social background	.06	.10*	.04	.17*	.07	-.01	.12*	-.09*
14 Managerial	-.01	.09*	.01	-.04	.04	.06	-.02	.05
15 Professional	.07	.14*	-.03	.14*	.10*	.12*	.00	.10*
16 Admin/secretarial	-.07	-.07	.03	.05	-.03	-.05	.06	-.13*
17 Other low skilled	-.01	-.26*	.03	-.15*	-.04	-.21*	.04	-.08
18 Get job: Uni degree	.10*	.17*	.00	.17*	.09*	.16*	.02	.05
19 Get job: PG degree	-.10*	.01	-.13*	.03	.03	.11*	-.01	.08
20 Do job: Uni degree	.02	.10*	.10*	.02	.08	.04	-.01	.08
21 Time to learn the job	.08	.21*	-.15*	.16*	.09*	.24*	-.06	.18*
22 Total training to learn the job	-.01	.07	.03	.11	.05	.04	-.03	.07
23 Graduateness	.07	.39*	-.01	.23*	.14*	.14*	.04	.06
24 Perceived skill use	-.05	-.20*	.04	-.27*	-.29*	-.35*	-.13*	-.09
25 Opportunity for skill use	.08	.22*	-.07	.44*	.32*	.35*	.17*	.09
26 Task discretion	.01	.19*	-.05	.21*	.19*	.11*	.20*	-.07
27 Work intensity	.07	.30*	.01	.14*	.14*	.10*	-.04	.18*
28 T&D	.03	.31*	-.01	.24*	.20*	.19*	.04	.05
29 Perceived job security	—	.04	.05	.24*	.19*	.12*	.13*	-.09
30 Pay	—	—	.02	.09*	.06	.15*	.02	.10*
31 Availability of alternatives	—	—	—	-.02	-.09*	.02	-.07	.02
32 Job satisfaction	—	—	—	—	.60*	.36*	.60*	-.26*
33 Organisational commitment	—	—	—	—	—	.28*	.37*	-.09
34 Career satisfaction	—	—	—	—	—	—	.16*	.05
35 Well-being	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	-.53*
36 Negative carry-over	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Note. Data source: Skills Survey 2006; * p<.05, ** p<.01, ***p<.001.

Phase III: Exploring career mobility for graduates via semi-structured interviews

In understanding contemporary graduate careers, this final phase of research aimed to explore graduates' entry into and movement out of early underemployment and the effects of this experience in later career mobility and outcomes. More specifically, in entry into underemployment it tests the proposition that perceived employability will lead to career indecision (P1) and discouragement from the GLM (P2) for graduates from non-professional degree courses, in comparison to those from professional courses; and that career indecision (P3) and discouragement from the GLM (P4) will increase the likelihood of underemployment in the first job. Exploring graduates' transition of out underemployment, it focuses on the proposition that lack of opportunities for development (P5) and prior employability perceptions (P6) effect graduates' perceived employability once on the job; that perceived employability will be associated with perceived ease of movement (P7) and willingness to move (P8) depending on the availability of opportunities in the GLM; and that quality of movement out of underemployment will depend on the availability of alternatives in the GLM (P9). With regards to career mobility and outcomes in the first ten years, it tests the proposition that for graduates who move out of initial underemployment job transitions will realise within the intermediate segment of the GLM (P10) and that early underemployment will result in negative well-being and career satisfaction (P11). Graduate career mobility is an under-researched area of research; therefore, an exploratory approach has been taken. This required an examination of graduates' career

histories, which provides in-depth information (Ladkin, 1999) on how graduates negotiate their careers within the wider constraints of the labour market (Goodson & Choi, 2008). Despite the common criticisms for the limited generalisability of findings (Ladkin, 1999) and the potential bias in responses as it relies heavily on an individual's autobiographical memory (Manzoni, Vermunt, Luijkx, & Muffels, 2010), a life history approach has been found to be particularly appropriate when there is scarcity of research on a subject area linking structure and agency (Faraday & Plummer, 1979; Lewis, 2008). For instance, it has been adopted in the early work on experiences of Polish immigrants in Europe and America (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1918; cited in Bell & Staw, 1989), understanding women's career mobility (Dex, 1984; Middleton, 1993) and youth employment in relation to unemployment (Baker & Elias, 1991). Thus, Phase III of this research involves an exploration of graduate career histories via semi-structured in-depth interviews (N=37).

Development of interview schedule and selection of participants

Prior to decisions with regards to the sample and interview schedule Strathclyde University Careers Service was consulted. These discussions suggested that, in support of the literature review, students and graduates from non-professional degree courses, such as history or geography, were particularly at a disadvantage due to availability of alternatives and their awareness of these (Graham, 2009, personal communication). With permission from advisees, access was gained to four careers services consultation sessions (two honours year engineering students and one third year sociology student

and one honours year marketing student). There were stark differences between the sessions of the former and the latter two advisees. The former mainly needed advice on CV preparation and interviewing techniques, as they had already made up their minds with regards to their career choices, while the latter needed to clarify their interests, abilities and options in the labour market. This was in line with the proposition that at the onset of their graduate careers there were differences between graduates depending on the nature of the degree course studied. Moreover, pilot interviews were conducted with 10 university graduates who had finished their first degree between 1998 and 2008 (five of which were from science and engineering backgrounds and five from social science, humanities and business backgrounds). The aim of the pilot interviews was to both observe any differences between graduates from different educational degree subject backgrounds and to finalise the interview schedule. As a result of the literature review, career service consultations and pilot interviews, a decision was made to compare career histories for graduates from non-professional (arts, social sciences and humanities; ASH) and those of relatively more professional (business and related courses, and science/engineering; non-ASH) degree courses.

Recruitment of participants for both the pilot and the actual interview was through convenience sampling, via snowball technique. This involved initially contacting a number of acquaintances who satisfy the eligibility criteria for the pilot (having graduated from their first degree in the last one to ten years) and the actual interview (having graduated with an ASH or non-ASH degree in the

last ten years), and asking them to contact any friends/family/colleagues who are also eligible. In this sense, a purposive sampling strategy was applied where relatively small numbers of participants who can provide detailed information on graduate careers were involved in the study (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Hence, in choosing participants, (i) an almost equal divide between non-professional and professional degree subjects; and (ii) an almost normal distribution of work experience within the first ten years was sought (with most participants having four to seven years of work experience). Data collection was terminated when the responses from participants saturated.

Participant description

Pilot group

The pilot group consisted of 10 participants aged between 24 and 31 (40% female). All but one (unemployed) were in full-time employment; eight held permanent contracts with two to ten years of work experience since leaving first degree. Organisational tenure ranged between three months to seven years. Mode of number of jobs held since university graduation was three (40%). Seven had graduated with either a 1st or upper 2nd class degree. Half of the participants had a postgraduate qualification..

Interview participants

In combination with the pilot group, interviews were conducted with 37 participants (mean age = 28, SD = 6 years; 43% female). Sixty-eight per cent held permanent jobs, 84 per cent had full-time jobs. Seventy per cent had at least one parent who holds a university degree or higher. Average job tenure

was 2.5 years (SD = 6.5 years). Average organisational tenure was 3.5 years (SD = 6.5 years). Only two participants had received their first degrees in England (Cambridge and Durham Universities), the remaining participants had graduated from Scottish universities. Forty three per cent of graduates had a business related degree (e.g., economics, HRM, marketing), another 43 per cent had arts, social science or humanities degrees (e.g., fine arts, English literature). Sixty-nine per cent of graduates had achieved a first or upper second class degree. Fifty per cent held a postgraduate degree. Average number of jobs since university graduation was three (SD=1.6). Average years of work experience was 5.5 years (SD=3 years). Table 6.5 describes participant characteristics.

The interview schedule

The interview schedule contained questions that aimed to explore graduates' educational and career history to date. Participants were informed of the purpose and the voluntary nature of the study. However, to avoid any bias in responses, participants were only informed of the specific aims of the study (i.e., exploring graduates' entry into and movement out of underemployment and how this experience effects career mobility and outcomes) after the completion of interviews and were initially informed that the purpose of the research was to 'understand graduates' career mobility'.

Interviews started with background questions that focused on demographics, e.g., age and marital status, parents' educational and occupational background, work experience during and after university, and job status and contract type of the current job. Participants were then asked questions on their career thoughts

(e.g., job/career preferences and career trajectory) and actions upon graduation from university. Career history part of the interview was generally the longest, where participants were asked to think back to the first job they had taken upon graduation and progress to their current job in a timeline. For each job, participants were asked (i) reasons for taking the job; (ii) job description and perception of job quality; (iii) attitudes towards this job; (iv) fit with career interests; and (v) reasons for leaving. Once the participant has discussed their latest and current job, retrospective questions such as feelings of underemployment throughout their career and perceived career success were asked. Upon completion of the interview, participants were asked to rate each job's quality using two hand-outs, one for specific job skills (Felstead et al., 2007) and another for other aspects of job quality (e.g., task discretion and pay). This enabled a comparison between graduates' descriptions of each job experience and the relatively objective ratings for each job and allowed tracking each participant's progress as they changed jobs (see Appendix IV for the interview schedule).

All interviews were tape recorded with permission from the participants. Depending on the number of jobs held by participants since graduation, interviews lasted between 35 minutes to 2.5 hours. All but two interviews were conducted face-to-face, at the researcher's office at the University of Strathclyde, Department of HRM.

Table 6.5 Description of participant characteristics (N=37)

P	Age	Sex	Work exp ^a	Contract ^b	Job status ^c	Parents education ^d	Job tenure ^e	Org tenure ^e	UNIVERSITY	Subject ^f	Class	Year	# Jobs
1	26	F	2	P	FT	N	8	24	Glasgow	SCI/ENG	Ord	2006	3
2	29	F	4	P	FT	N	24	36	Glasgow	ASH	1 st	2001	2
3	27	M	4	U	N/A	N	N/A	N/A	Glasgow	SCI/ENG	2:1	2005	4
4	28	M	6	P	FT	Y	18	70	Strathclyde	BUS	2:1	2002	3
5	29	M	6	P	FT	N	9	48	Edinburgh	SCI/ENG	2:1	2004	2
6	28	F	6	P	FT	Y	76	76	Strathclyde	BUS	2:1	2001	1
7	33	F	6	P	FT	Y	18	18	West of Scotland	ASH	Ord	2003	4
8	31	M	7	P	FT	Y	42	84	Strathclyde	SCI/ENG	1 st	2001	3
9	35	M	10	T	FT	Y	3	3	Strathclyde	ASH	1 st	1998	3
10	32	M	10	P	FT	Y	10	10	Glasgow	SCI/ENG	2:2	1999	9
11	25	M	2	T	FL	Y	FL	FL	Glasgow	ASH	Ord	2005	3
12	24	F	3	P	FT	Y	12	12	Cambridge	ASH	2:2	2006	4
13	24	F	10	T	PT	Y	3	3	Glasgow	ASH	2:2	2008	2
14	32	M	7	T	FT	Y	24	24	Durham	BUS	1 st	2002	5
15	23	M	2	P	FT	Y	2	2	Strathclyde	BUS	2:1	2007	2
16	24	M	2	P	FT	Y	3	24	Strathclyde	BUS	2:1	2007	3
17	59	F	8	P	FT	N	456	456	Glasgow	ASH	Ord	2001	1
18	26	M	4	P	FT	N	14	14	Glasgow	BUS	2:1	2005	2
19	26	F	2	T	FT	Y	5	5	Glasgow	ASH	2:1	2005	3
20	25	M	2	P	FT	Y	24	24	Strathclyde	BUS	2:1	2007	1
21	25	M	5	T	FT	Y	1	1	Strathclyde	BUS	Ord	2004	4
22	25	M	5	P	FT	Y	6	6	Glasgow	ASH	Ord	2004	3
23	32	M	9	P	FT	Y	30	30	Strathclyde	BUS	2:1	1999	3

Note. Data source: graduate interviews; ^a, Years of work experience; ^b, P=Permanent contract, T=Temporary contract, U=Unemployed; ^c, FT=Full-time, PT=Part-time, FL=Freelance; ^d, Parents education Y=at least one parent university educated; ^e Job and organisational tenure in months; ^f, SCI/ENG=Science/engineering degree; BUS=Business related degree; ASH=Arts, social sciences and humanities

Table 6.5 continued...

P	Age	Sex	Work exp ^a	Contract ^b	Job status ^c	Parents education ^d	Job tenure ^e	Org tenure ^e	UNIVERSITY	Subject ^f	Class	Year	# Jobs
24	23	F	10	P	FT	N	12	12	Strathclyde	BUS	1 st	2008	1
25	25	M	2	P	FT	Y	3	3	Strathclyde	BUS	2:2	2007	3
26	31	F	8	T	FT	Y	12	48	Glasgow	ASH	2:1	2000	5
27	28	F	7	P	FT	Y	24	48	Glasgow	BUS	2:1	2002	2
28	29	M	6	T	FT	N	5	5	Stirling	ASH	2:1	2004	6
29	28	M	6	P	FT	Y	24	24	Stirling	ASH	Ord	2003	3
30	33	F	11	P	FT	N	12	84	Edinburgh Napier	BUS	Ord	1999	5
31	27	F	7	P	FT	N	18	30	Edinburgh	ASH	2:1	2003	3
32	25	F	2	T	FT	Y	12	18	Glasgow	ASH	2:1	2006	1
33	28	M	6	P	FT	Y	66	66	Strathclyde	BUS	2:1	2004	2
34	27	M	6	P	FT	Y	30	30	Glasgow	ASH	2:1	2004	2
35	23	F	2	P	PT	N	12	12	Glasgow	ASH	1 st	2008	3
36	27	F	10	U	N/A	Y	N/A	N/A	Strathclyde	BUS	1 st	2006	2
37	30	M	0	U	N/A	Y	N/A	N/A	Glasgow	BUS	2:1	2004	1

Note. Data source: graduate interviews; ^a, Years of work experience; ^b, P=Permanent contract, T=Temporary contract, U=Unemployed; ^c, FT=Full-time, PT=Part-time, FL=Freelance; ^d, Parents education Y=at least one parent university educated; ^e Job and organisational tenure in months; ^f, SCI/ENG=Science/engineering degree; BUS=Business related degree; ASH=Arts, social sciences and humanities

Analytical strategy

Phase I: Graduate employability

Analysis of the factors associated with enhancing graduate employability and the extent to which this reflects a self-directed process made use of data from the survey of 2009/2010 graduates, which was developed for the purposes of this phase, and of data from graduate interviews (see Phase III below). Using the survey of 2009/2010 graduates multiple hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to test the hypotheses that (i) upon graduation willingness (job and career preferences and self-esteem; H1) and opportunities (social and educational background; H2) determine the extent to which graduates engage in CSM (career exploration, job search, networking and guidance seeking); and that (ii) CSM is associated with perceived employability (H3). Moreover, multiple mediation analyses (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) were conducted to determine the indirect effect of willingness and opportunities to engage in CSM on perceived employability (see Figure 6.1 and Table 6.6 for a summary of hypotheses tested and the sources of data in analysis).

In testing the role of willingness and opportunities on the extent to which graduates engage in CSM, hierarchical regression analyses were chosen as the appropriate analytical strategy, rather than entering all predictor variables (i.e., willingness and opportunities) in one step. This was because the great majority of the research on CSM has already established a positive link between willingness and CSM, yet we know very little as to the extent to which opportunities enhance/limit CSM over and above the effect of one's willingness.

Therefore, in the multiple hierarchical regression analyses, willingness variables (i.e., preferences and self-esteem) were entered in Step 2, followed by opportunities variables (i.e., social and educational background) in Step 3. An examination of the variance explained (ΔR^2) in Step 2 and Step 3 was used to determine the role of self-directedness of CSM.

The multiple hierarchical regression analysis testing the effect of CSM on perceived employability controlled for the determinants of CSM in Step 2 before including CSM in Step 3. Multiple mediation analyses using the survey of 2009/2010 graduates data reports indirect effects as shown in the bootstrapped coefficients and within the 95% bootstrap confidence interval.

Phase II: Occupational boundaries of the graduate labour market

Analysis of the occupational boundaries within which graduate careers develop involved multiple hierarchical regression analyses to test the hypotheses that 'emerging' occupations differ from traditional and non-graduate occupations in job quality (H5) and employment related outcomes (H6); and that intrinsic features of work have a greater impact on employment related outcomes in comparison to extrinsic features of work (H7). This analysis was supplemented by qualitative interview data (see Phase III below).

Multiple hierarchical regression analyses treated each aspect of job quality (i.e., job complexity, work skills, perceived skill use, opportunity to use skills, task discretion, work intensity, training and development opportunities, job security and pay) and employment-related outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction, organisational commitment, perceived availability of alternatives, well-being

and career satisfaction) as the dependent variables. In testing H5 and H6, four occupational dummy variables (i.e., managerial, professional, admin/secretarial and other low skilled; comparison category: associate professional occupations) were entered in the regression in Step 2 following control variables¹⁰. The role of intrinsic work characteristics (Step2) over and above that of extrinsic work characteristics (Step3) on these outcomes were also tested using hierarchical regression analysis and determined based on ΔR^2 in employment-related outcomes at each stage. (see Figure 6.1 and Table 6.6 for a summary of hypotheses and the sources of data used in analysis).

Phase III: Graduate career mobility

Graduates' entry into and movement out of early underemployment and the effects of this experience in later career mobility and outcomes were explored using career history data from the semi-structure, in-depth graduate interviews. Each interview was verbatim transcribed by the researcher. A list of descriptive codes corresponding to the key themes that are explored in each transitional phase was generated from each interview script using the techniques suggested by Miles and Huberman (1983). In exploring graduates' entry into underemployment, this corresponded to participants' CSM, career indecision, discouragement from the GLM and perceived employability upon graduation. In exploring movement out of underemployment the key themes were: perception of employability, organisational support for developing employability,

¹⁰ Control variables: Age, sex (1=Female), work experience, organisational tenure, organisational size, sector (1=Private sector), postgraduate qualification (1=Yes), highest maths qualification, university type (1=New university), degree subject (1=Professional degree subject), degree class (1=1st/2:1 classification), and social background.

participants' willingness and perceived ease of movement. Finally, in exploring graduates' overall career outcomes the key themes were physical and psychological well-being, and career satisfaction. Each interview script was coded by the researcher at two different points in time. While this does not completely eliminate the subjectivity bias of data analysis, it was aimed to increase the internal validity of the findings.

The analysis involved an iterative process (see Figure 6.2) of sorting interview scripts (i) based on whether the participant has experienced initial underemployment ('wrong'-foot) or not ('right-foot') (path *c*); then, for the 'wrong-foot' participants, whether they moved out of initial underemployment ('wrong-foot'-'right-track') or not ('stuck') (path *d*); and finally, 'right-track' scripts were sorted into 'fast-track' and 'slow-track' based on graduates' pace of progression towards their career goals (path *e*). In this sense, 'fast-track' also involves the self-employed (N=2) and those with a job for life (N=2).

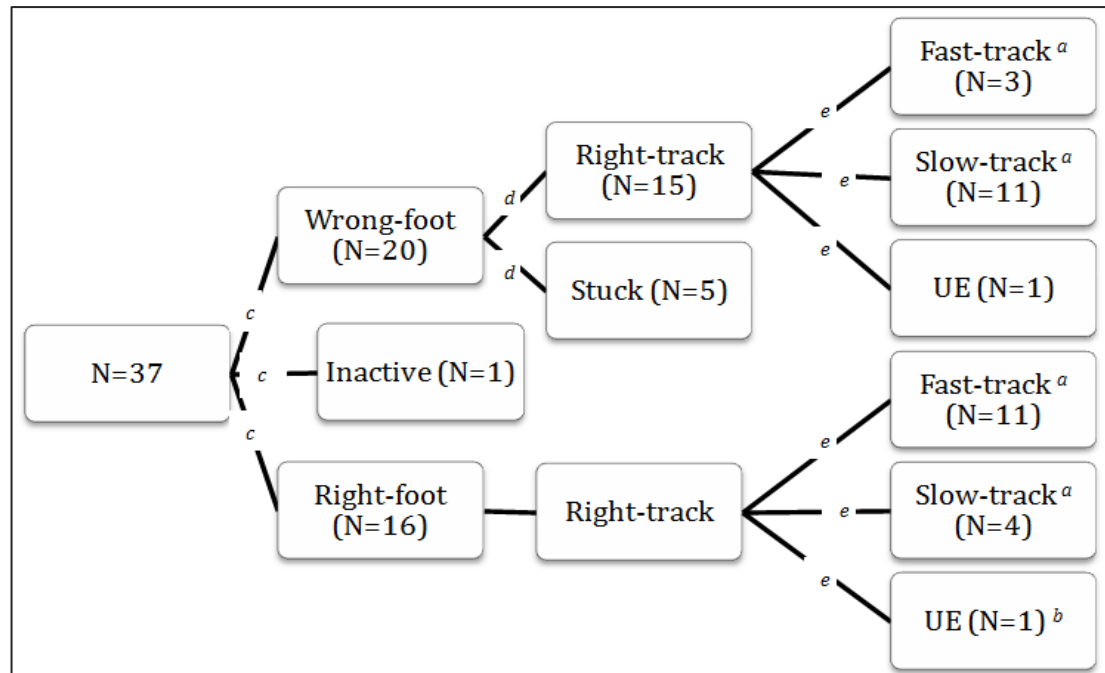
Using this analytical framework, the proposition that perceived employability will lead to career indecision (P1) and discouragement from the GLM (P2) depending on availability of alternatives; and that career indecision (P3) and discouragement from the GLM (P4) will, in turn, be instrumental in graduates' entry into underemployment were explored by comparisons of path *c*. This allowed sorting interview transcripts depending on participants' CSM, perceived employability, and experienced career indecision and discouragement from the GLM, and their perceived quality of the first job (i.e.,

'wrong-foot' / 'right-foot'). This analysis also informed findings from the survey of 2009/2010 graduates on early graduate employability.

'Wrong-foot' interview scripts were then sorted into those who moved out ('wrong-foot'-'right-track') and those who could not ('stuck') in exploring the role of opportunities provided by the job (P5) and prior perception of employability (P6) on perceived employability as a result of experience of underemployment; and the role of perceived employability on graduates' perceived ease of movement (P7) and willingness to move (P8) (path *d*).

'Right-track' (including the 'wrong-foot'-'right-track') participants' interview transcripts were then sorted with regards to the quality of their overall transitions (path *e*). Sorting the 'wrong-foot'-'right-track' participants' transcripts into 'slow-track' and 'fast-track' allowed exploring the proposition that the quality of transitions out of early underemployment will depend on the opportunities available in the GLM (P9). Moreover, comparing 'right-foot'-'right-track' participants' overall career history with those of 'wrong-foot'-'right-track' allowed testing the proposition that further job transitions movement out of initial underemployment will realise within the intermediate segment of the GLM (P10). This analysis involved examining participants' description of jobs, perceived job quality and attitudes toward the job and the organisation, and therefore, informed findings from Phase II on the occupational boundaries of the GLM. Finally, comparisons of 'stuck', 'slow-track' and 'fast-track' participants overall well-being career satisfaction informed of the role of early underemployment on later career outcomes (P11).

Figure 6.2 Analytical strategy used in exploring graduate career mobility



Note. ^a represents different patterns in graduate career mobility and will be discussed later in the chapter; ^b UE: unemployed; ^c analytical strategy for exploring graduates' entry into underemployment; ^d analytical strategy for exploring graduates' movement out of underemployment; and ^e analytical strategy for exploring graduate career mobility and outcomes following early underemployment.

Chapter conclusions

This chapter aimed to operationalise the research framework offered in Chapter Five. This required a mixed methods approach to the study of contemporary graduate careers. Corresponding to the three stages of conceptual analyses presented in Chapter Two, Chapter Three and Chapter Four, Phase I of this research strategy examined graduate employability using a survey of 2009/2010 graduates measuring willingness and opportunities to engage in CSM, CSM and perceived employability; Phase II then used graduate data from a nationally representative survey to understand the boundaries within which graduate careers shape; finally Phase III involved use of career history data from semi-structured interviews to explore career mobility for graduates.

Data from different phases of this research were triangulated to increase validity of findings. Interviews not only allowed one to explore graduates' career histories and, thereby, career mobility in the labour market, but also contributed to understanding of the nature of graduate labour market and to graduates' attitudes and perceptions with regards to career choice upon graduation. In this sense, data from Phase III was used to complement that from Phase I and II.

Table 6.6 List of propositions and hypotheses and source of analysis

Hypotheses (H)		Analysis
<i>Research objective 1: To examine the factors associated with enhancing graduate employability prior to securing the first job and the extent to which this reflects a self-directed process</i>		
H1	Upon graduation from university, (a) job and career preferences and (b) self-esteem will be related to the extent to which graduates engage in CSM (career exploration, job search, networking and guidance seeking).	09/10 survey, INT
H2	(a) Social and (b) educational background (university type, degree subject, degree class and work experience) affects the extent to which graduates engage in CSM (career exploration, job search, networking and guidance seeking).	09/10 survey, INT
H3	Upon graduation from university, CSM (career exploration, job search, networking, guidance seeking) will be related to graduates' perceived employability.	09/10 survey, INT
H4	(a) Willingness (job and career preferences, and self-esteem) and (b) opportunities (social and educational background) to engage in CSM will indirectly influence perceived employability via CSM.	09/10 survey, INT
<i>Research objective 2: To examine the occupational boundaries within which graduate careers develop</i>		
H5	Job quality (i.e., job complexity, work skills, task discretion, work intensity, training and development opportunities, perceived job security and pay) in 'emerging' graduate occupations will differ from that in traditional and non-graduate occupations.	SS06, INT
H6	Employment related outcomes (job satisfaction, organisational commitment, perceived availability of alternatives, career satisfaction and psychological well-being) for graduates in 'emerging' occupations will differ from those for graduates in traditional and non-graduate occupations.	SS06, INT
H7	Intrinsic job characteristics that lead to development through the job (i.e., work skills and task discretion) and training and development opportunities provided by the organisation will have a greater impact on graduates' job satisfaction, organisational commitment, perceived availability of alternatives, career satisfaction and psychological well-being than job security and pay.	SS06, INT

Note. 09/10 survey: Survey of 2009/2010 graduates; INT: Graduate interviewsSS06: Skills Survey 2006;

Table 6.6 continued...

	Propositions (P)	Analysis
<i>Research objective 3: To explore graduates' entry into and movement out of early underemployment and the effects of this experience in later career mobility and outcomes</i>		
P1	Unfavourable employability perceptions will be more likely to result in career indecision for graduates from non-professional degree courses, in comparison to those from professional degree courses.	INT
P2	Unfavourable employability perceptions will be more likely to result in discouragement from the GLM for graduates from non-professional degree courses, in comparison to those from professional degree courses.	INT
P3	Graduates who experience career indecision upon graduation will be more likely to be underemployed in the first job.	INT
P4	Graduates who experience discouragement from the GLM upon graduation will be more likely to be underemployed in the first job.	INT
P5	Underemployment in the first job negatively affects employability due to lack of opportunities for CSM provided by the job/organisation.	INT
P6	Underemployment in the first job negatively affects employability due to graduates' prior lack of CSM skills and unfavourable perceptions of employability.	INT
P7	Unfavourable perception of employability will be more likely to result in perceived difficulty of movement out of initial underemployment for graduates from non-professional degree courses, in comparison to those from professional degree courses.	INT
P8	Perception of employability will be more likely to result in willingness to move out of initial underemployment for graduates from professional degree courses, in comparison to those from non-professional degree courses.	INT
P9	The quality of transitions out of underemployment will depend on the nature of opportunities in the GLM, such that willingness to move and perceived ease of movement are more likely to result in transitions into 'emerging' occupations, rather than into traditional graduate occupations, for graduates from non-professional degree courses in comparison to those from professional degree courses.	INT
P10	For graduates who move out of initial underemployment, further job transitions will realise within the intermediate segment of the GLM.	INT
P11	The experience of early underemployment will negatively affect well-being and career satisfaction.	INT

Note. INT: graduate interviews.

Chapter Seven

7. FINDINGS I: GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

Introduction

The unequivocal finding that social and educational background have an effect on graduate employment outcomes, at least at the start of careers (Brown & Hesketh, 2004; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006; Smetherham, 2006a), contradicts the increasing emphasis on individual responsibility and the role of employability placed on securing employment and developing careers by the UK skills policies and the 'new' career discourse, which inadvertently put the blame of underemployment on the graduate. If employability really is the key to securing high skilled work, then, based on these findings on differential access to graduate jobs, it could be argued that social and educational boundaries limit the extent to which graduates engage in CSM, and, therefore, enhance employability. Following this, this chapter aims to examine the factors associated with enhancing graduate employability prior to securing the first job and the extent to which this reflects a self-directed process to further our understanding of contemporary graduate careers. More specifically, it tests the hypotheses that willingness (H1; job and career preferences, and self-esteem) and opportunities (H2; social and educational background) affect the extent to which graduates engage in CSM upon graduation; that CSM affects perceived employability (H3); and that willingness and

opportunities to engage in CSM indirectly influence perceived employability via CSM (H4) (See Table 7.1 for the list of hypotheses tested in this chapter).

Table 7.1 List of hypotheses tested in relation to graduate employability

<i>Research objective 1: To examine the factors associated with enhancing graduate employability prior to securing the first job and the extent to which this reflects a self-directed process</i>	
H1	Upon graduation from university, (a) job and career preferences and (b) self-esteem will be related to the extent to which graduates engage in CSM (career exploration, job search, networking and guidance seeking).
H2	(a) Social and (b) educational background (university type, degree subject, degree class and work experience) affects the extent to which graduates engage in CSM (career exploration, job search, networking and guidance seeking).
H3	Upon graduation from university, CSM (career exploration, job search, networking, guidance seeking) will be related to graduates' perceived employability.
H4	(a) Willingness (job and career preferences, and self-esteem) and (b) opportunities (social and educational background) to engage in CSM will indirectly influence perceived employability via CSM.

This chapter reports findings from (i) multiple hierarchical regression analyses to determine the direct effects of preferences, self-esteem and social and educational background on CSM, and of CSM on perceived employability; and (ii) multiple mediation analyses (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) to determine the indirect effects of willingness and opportunities on perceived employability via CSM. These quantitative analyses use data from the survey of 2009/2010 graduates in the UK. The chapter then complements these findings with qualitative interview data from graduate career histories.

Determinants of career self-management and perceived employability

This section examines the role of willingness (preferences and self-esteem) and opportunities (social and educational background) as the determinants of the

extent to which graduates engage in CSM activities and the effect of this on perceived employability upon graduation. The CSM activities included in this analysis are: career exploration (environmental and self-exploration), job search, networking and guidance seeking. In the multiple hierarchical regression analyses, only the variables that explain incremental variance, as reflected in ΔR^2 , are reported. In the multiple mediation analyses, testing for the indirect effect of willingness and opportunities to engage in CSM on perceived employability via CSM, only the variables that have significant indirect effects on perceived employability via CSM, as reflected in the total direct bootstrap coefficients and the 95% bias corrected confidence interval, are reported. This analysis controls for variability due to age, sex and cohort, but also that reflected in the use of sampling methods (i.e., announcement of the survey, time elapsed after graduation and university region).

Testing for the effect of willingness (H1; job and career preferences, and self-esteem) and opportunities (H2; social and educational background) on graduates' CSM, Table 7.2 describes the results from the multiple hierarchical regression analyses. This suggests that overall job and career preferences, and self-esteem significantly predict all aspects of CSM examined here, while social and educational background only predict self-exploration and guidance seeking behaviours. More specifically, self-esteem was significantly related to all but the self-exploration aspect of CSM. In particular, self-esteem was strongly related to job search ($\beta=.54$, $p<.05$) and networking ($\beta=.42$, $p<.05$) and variance explained in these aspects was significantly higher in comparison to others, 30 and 18 per cent, respectively. Intrinsic job preferences was positively related to environment ($\beta=.14$, $p<.05$) and

self-exploration ($\beta=.14$, $p<.05$). Moreover, environmental exploration was positively related to boundaryless career preference ($\beta=.10$, $p<.05$) and negatively to work-family balance preference ($\beta=-.10$, $p<.05$). Graduates with high entrepreneurial preferences ($\beta=.12$, $p<.05$) and those who have work experience ($\beta=.16$, $p<.05$) were more likely, while, in comparison to graduates from non-professional degree subjects, those from professional degree courses were less likely ($\beta=-.13$, $p<.05$) to engage in self-exploration. Parents' education ($\beta=.15$, $p<.05$) and work experience ($\beta=.16$, $p<.05$) were positively related to guidance seeking.

Table 7.3 reports multiple hierarchical regression analysis predicting perceived employability based on CSM (H3), controlling for determinants of CSM. This suggests that self-esteem, career preferences and educational background explain slightly more variance ($\Delta R^2=.25$) in perceived employability than CSM variables ($\Delta R^2=.18$). More specifically, with the inclusion of CSM variables in the equation in Step 2, the effects of self-esteem (from $\beta=.38$, $p<.05$ to $\beta=.11$, $p<.05$), boundaryless (from $\beta=.25$, $p<.05$ to $\beta=.20$, $p<.05$) and entrepreneurial career preference (from $\beta=.17$, $p<.05$ to $\beta=.15$, $p<.05$) were weakened, while that of professional degree courses in comparison to non-professional ($\beta=.16$, $p<.05$) and term-time work ($\beta=-.10$, $p<.05$) remained stable. Amongst the CSM variables, job search ($\beta=.44$, $p<.05$) and guidance seeking ($\beta=.15$, $p<.05$) were positively related to perceived employability, and CSM accounted for 18 per cent of the variance in perceived employability over the effects of its determinants.

Table 7.2 Hierarchical regression analyses testing the determinants of CSM (N=433)

	Environment exploration			Self-exploration			Job search		
	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 3$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 3$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 3$
Age	-.10*	-.10*	-.10*	.07	.05	-.02	.16***	.12***	.10*
Male	-.01	-.04	-.04	-.04	-.06	-.03	-.02	-.09	-.07
2010 Cohort	.02	.01	.01	-.11	-.12	-.11	-.17**	-.12*	-.11
University announcement	-.04	-.04	-.05	-.01	-.03	-.02	-.15**	-.11*	-.10*
Time after graduation	.11	.09	.09	.03	.02	.02	-.06	-.04	-.04
Scottish university	-.08	-.08	-.08	.01	.03	.04	.12*	.03	.01
Self-esteem		.21***	.21***		-.04	-.06		.54***	.54***
Extrinsic job preferences		.05	.07		-.10	-.11		-.06	-.07
Intrinsic job preference		.15*	.14*		.17*	.14*		-.02	-.03
Boundaryless preference		.11*	.10*		.12*	.08		.07	.06
Work-family balance		-.10*	-.10*		.09	.09		-.04	-.03
Entrepreneurial preference		.06	.08		.14***	.12**		.05	.05
Parent education ^a			.04			-.01			.01
Parent occupation ^b			-.08			-.07			-.10*
New university			-.02			.06			.01
Business degree ^c			-.06			-.01			-.04
Professional degree ^c			-.01			-.13**			-.05
1st/2:1			.01			-.06			.00
Term-time work			-.08			-.03			.07
Work experience			.05			.16***			.02
ΔF	3.20**	6.66***	.98	2.04	5.23***	2.75**	5.49***	33.84***	1.36
R^2	.03	.10	.10	.01	.07	.03	.06	.36	.36
ΔR^2		.07	.00		.06	.04		.30	.00

Note. Data source: Online survey of 2009 and 2010 graduates; ^a (1=At least one parent holds a university degree or higher); ^b (1=At least one parent is in managerial/professional occupation); ^c comparison category: non-professional courses (arts, social sciences and humanities); * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; R^2 reflects adjusted R^2 .

Table 7.2 continued...

	Networking			Guidance seeking		
	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 3$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 3$
Age	.11*	.07	.09	-.17***	-.17***	-.16**
Male	.05	-.01	.02	.06	.05	.03
2010 Cohort	-.18**	-.13**	-.07	-.01	.00	.04
University announcement	-.01	.02	.01	-.01	.00	-.01
Time after graduation	-.22***	-.21***	-.20***	-.07	-.05	-.04
Scottish university	.03	-.04	-.08	-.07	-.10	-.10
Self-esteem		.42***	.42***		.16***	.15***
Extrinsic job preferences		-.11	-.10		-.01	-.01
Intrinsic job preference		.04	.01		-.01	.01
Boundaryless preference		.05	.04		.09	.06
Work-family balance		-.03	-.04		-.01	-.01
Entrepreneurial preference		.08	.08		-.06	-.04
Parent education ^a			.01			.15**
Parent occupation ^b			.03			-.07
New university			-.06			-.08
Business degree ^c			-.06			-.02
Professional degree ^c			-.11*			.01
1st/2:1			-.06			.09
Term-time work			.07			.01
Work experience			.00			.16***
ΔF	3.81**	17.61***	1.36	2.68*	2.69*	2.96**
R^2	.04	.22	.23	.02	.05	.08
ΔR^2		.18	.01		.03	.03

Note. Data source: Online survey of 2009 and 2010 graduates; ^a (1=At least one parent holds a university degree or higher); ^b (1=At least one parent is in managerial/professional occupation); ^c comparison category: non-professional courses (arts, social sciences and humanities); * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; R^2 reflects adjusted R^2 .

Table 7.3 Hierarchical regression analyses testing the influence of CSM on perceived employability (N=433)

	Perceived employability		
	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 3$
Age	.05	.03	.02
Male	.07	-.03	.00
2010 Cohort	-.09	-.10	-.05
University announcement	-.05	-.03	.02
Time after graduation	.02	.01	.03
Scottish university	.25***	.17**	.17**
Self-esteem		.38***	.11*
Extrinsic job preferences		.03	.06
Intrinsic job preference		-.02	-.02
Boundaryless preference		.25***	.20***
Work-family balance		-.02	.00
Entrepreneurial preference		.17***	.15***
Parent education ^a		-.04	-.07
Parent occupation ^b		-.03	.02
New university		-.08	-.07
Business degree ^c		.05	.07
Professional degree ^c		.16**	.16**
1st/2:1		.06	.05
Term-time work		-.10*	-.10*
Work experience		-.04	-.07
Environment exploration			.06
Self-exploration			.03
Job search			.44***
Networking			.02
Guidance seeking			.15***
ΔF	3.63*	12.08***	27.15***
R^2	.04	.29	.47
ΔR^2		.25	.18

Note. Data source: online survey of 2009 and 2010 graduates in the UK; ^a (1=At least one parent holds a university degree or higher); ^b (1=At least one parent is in managerial/professional occupation); ^c comparison category: non-professional courses (arts, social sciences and humanities); * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; R^2 reflects adjusted R^2 .

Testing for H4, Table 7.4 describes the indirect effects of job and career preferences, self-esteem and social and educational background on perceived employability via CSM. This suggests that, amongst the indicators of CSM, only self-esteem ($B = .31$, $S.E. = .06$; 95% $CI = .21 - .42$) and work experience ($B = .13$, $S.E. = .04$; 95% $CI = .05 - .21$) have overall indirect effects on perceived

employability via CSM. More specifically, self-esteem indirectly predicted perceived employability via job search ($B=.26$, $S.E. = .04$; 95% $CI=.18 - .35$) and guidance seeking ($B=.03$, $S.E. = .01$; 95% $CI=.01 - .06$). Similarly, perception of employability was indirectly predicted by work experience via job search ($B=.08$, $S.E. = .03$; 95% $CI=.02 - .14$) and guidance seeking ($B=.04$, $S.E. = .01$; 95% $CI=.01 - .07$).

Table 7.4 Multiple mediation analyses testing the indirect effects of job and career preferences, self-esteem, and social and educational background on perceived employability via CSM (N=433)

	Indirect effects on perceived employability via...					
	... total indirect effect		... environment exploration		... self exploration	
	B (SE)	95% CI	B (SE)	95% CI	B (SE)	95% CI
Extrinsic job preferences	-.02 (.01)	(-.05)-(.00)	.01 (.00)	(.00)-(.02)	.00 (.00)	(-.01)-(.00)
Intrinsic job preferences	-.02 (.01)	(-.03)-(.00)	.00 (.00)	(.00)-(.00)	.00 (.00)	(-.00)-(.00)
Boundaryless career preference	.10 (.07)	(-.03)-(.25)	.02 (.02)	(.00)-(.06)	-.01 (.01)	(-.03)-(.02)
Work-family balance preference	.01 (.03)	(-.04)-(.09)	.00 (.01)	(-.02)-(.01)	.00 (.01)	(-.01)-(.01)
Entrepreneurial career preference	.02 (.02)	(-.01)-(.06)	.00 (.00)	(.00)-(.02)	.00 (.00)	(.00)-(.01)
Self-esteem	.31 (.06)	(.21)-(.42)	.02 (.01)	(.00)-(.01)	.00 (.00)	(-.01)-(.00)
Parent education ^a	-.03 (.04)	(-.10)-(.04)	.00 (.01)	(-.02)-(.01)	.00 (.03)	(-.01)-(.01)
Parent occupation ^b	-.06 (.03)	(-.13)-(.00)	-.01 (.01)	(-.03)-(.00)	.00 (.01)	(-.01)-(.01)
New university	-.01 (.04)	(-.10)-(.07)	.00 (.01)	(-.02)-(.02)	.00 (.01)	(-.01)-(.01)
Business degree ^c	.03 (.05)	(-.08)-(.11)	.00 (.01)	(-.03)-(.01)	.00 (.04)	(-.01)-(.01)
Professional degree ^c	-.02 (.03)	(-.09)-(.05)	.00 (.01)	(-.02)-(.01)	.00 (.01)	(-.03)-(.01)
1st/2:1	.02 (.04)	(-.05)-(.09)	.00 (.01)	(-.02)-(.01)	.00 (.01)	(-.02)-(.01)
Term-time work	.04 (.04)	(-.03)-(.11)	-.01 (.01)	(-.03)-(.00)	.00 (.00)	(.00)-(.01)
Work experience	.13 (.04)	(.05)-(.21)	.01 (.01)	(.00)-(.03)	.00 (.01)	(-.01)-(.03)

Note. Data source: online survey of 2009 and 2010 graduates in the UK; ^a (1=At least one parent holds a university degree or higher); ^b (1=At least one parent is in managerial/professional occupation); ^c comparison category: non-professional courses (arts, social sciences and humanities).

Largely corresponding to the results from survey of 2009/2010 graduates, early career history data from graduate interviews suggested that job preferences, educational background (particularly degree subject, work experience and degree class), and, to a lesser extent, social background and career preferences were found to be related to CSM and employability. Job preference clarity, rather than the nature of these preferences had a role in engagement in CSM. Graduates who had clear job preferences had started engaging in CSM prior to graduation, either in their third or fourth year. Their descriptions of these early stages in their careers commonly make reference to the substantial amount of time and energy allocated to finding out about the availability of jobs in the labour market that match their goals. This not only clarifies their strengths and options in the labour market, but also informs them of their employability for different jobs. Hence, for these graduates, there was a sense of ease with which they place themselves in the GLM. This is clearly reflected in Participant 20's account of his CSM in early career:

It was very much chosen by not graduate material but by finding people who work for those companies and speaking to them about what their actual day-to-day jobs were. I went to careers fairs, corporate presentations; I spoke to some lecturers, and the contacts who maybe graduated a couple of years ago. I put quite an effort into finding out information. So I defined what I wanted to do and was trying to find where I can do that. (Participant 20)

In contrast, graduates who did not engage in CSM commonly reported a general lack of preferences, almost as if they were indifferent to the jobs they want to

attain, without necessarily reference to employability for high skilled work. Participant 35's description of her early job search behaviour clarifies this further:

I wasn't really applying for jobs with specific preferences. I just went to recruitment agencies and got on their books. They put me on temporary work. From there I think it was just applying for everything left, right and centre, thinking I can do that. (Participant 35)

Using the skills gained during university was one of the top preferences at the start of careers. This was, however, a rather generic preference for some with little substance to its nature. Others, on the other hand, provided detailed clear preferences which also reflected extensive career exploration. For instance, following his extensive CSM, Participant 20 describes his initial preferences as follows:

I wanted to get into a company where I could work on large projects. And by large, I mean working across different business areas in different geographies. I wanted to have a role in there where I was bringing people together. That was one thing which I really enjoyed doing. Throughout the few years in university I've seen my key skill developing as a people's person and being able to work with different stakeholders and people from different backgrounds, and bringing them together to one goal. So I wanted to find a job and a company where I'd be able to do that and further enhance those skills. (Participant 20)

While data from survey of 2009/ 2010 graduates suggests a role for preferences on CSM and perceived employability, interview data suggest that this is a rather reciprocal relationship and also largely based on educational history. Supporting the findings from multiple mediation analysis using the survey of 2009/2010 graduates, the distinction between those who express their preferences in rather vague terms with those who have clear preferences and favourable perceptions of employability was very much related to actually having work experience in the subject area. This was harder for graduates from non-professional degree subjects due to a perceived lack of clear career routes. Participant 28 provides an interesting example in this sense, as he had a perception of lack of alternatives in the labour market in relation to his sociology degree and during his university education had haphazardly taken up part-time work in a recruitment agency which helped form his preferences:

I have to say I worked in recruitment in my last year at university and that got me the bug for the people aspect. Predominantly you were discussing potential jobs with candidates. I got a job as an in-house recruiter for a large telecommunication company. From there I worked in the HR department in recruitment. And I had access to all HR information, they gave me different projects. So my career took off from there. (Participant 28)

In line with results from the survey of 2009/2010 graduates, work experience (internships and work placements) were instrumental in interview participants' career exploration, job search and guidance seeking, thereby clarifying goals and how these may be achieved in the GLM. This was

particularly helpful for those graduates who did not aim for graduate trainee programmes but also were unwilling to succumb to non-graduate jobs upon graduation. Differences based on degree subject were again particularly salient here. Interview participants from non-professional degree subjects commonly had little/no idea what other graduates from previous cohorts did and assumed most to be back at university either completing a more specialised course or taking the academic route. Networking and seeking guidance were, therefore, particularly difficult for these graduates. The excerpt from Participant 2 below describes how networks gained via summer placements showed him the ropes in terms of career development:

When I was actually at Schandwick I met a great number of people in the public affairs company but also more senior members, such as those who work for members of the parliament, might have been there. And they suggested that if you want to do any of these different kinds of jobs whether in public affairs or elsewhere, a great many people start of their work lives working for MPs. ... These people have arrived in public affairs via a similar route and I was inspired by them. No one grows up saying I want to work for, say, Accenture. It's just not a career option. You just don't know these jobs unless you're directed and found the connection through industry. (Participant 2)

In describing their career histories interview participants mostly made no reference to their career preferences, except for those who chose to start their own business upon graduation (N=2). CSM was also instrumental for these two participants. Similar to those who spoke to professionals to find out about their

opportunities, these participants have explored their fields before engaging in self-employment and sought support from their families. Nevertheless, in Participant 34's case this decision was mostly due to a shock event; finding out about a rather serious health condition:

I couldn't see one day. So they told me I had a tumour. It was fortunately benign but it kind of gave me a different outlook on things. I probably would have never gone self-employed, if I hadn't felt like I had the second chance. (Participant 34)

A considerable minority of interview participants (N= 8) perceived a futility in engaging in CSM due to the lower degree classifications they achieved (2:2 or ordinary degree) and/or coming from more disadvantaged backgrounds. Not having a 2:1 or higher degree classification had an inhibitory role in graduates' job search and career exploration (N= 5) as they felt the opportunities in the GLM were not available to them (e.g., *"Because I didn't have an honours degree, no one would look at you. So you get excluded"* Participant 21) and, therefore, developed unfavourable employability perceptions in high skilled work (e.g., *"Finishing with a 2:2, I know I couldn't aim particularly high"* Participant 13).

The role of social background came into play in graduates' access to social and professional networks to secure 'good' work. It was the perception of this minority of graduates (N=4) that they would never be given good opportunities because they lacked contacts with the 'right people'. As can be observed from Participant 22's description below, there was also the perception that if you can

'afford' not to work in low skilled part-time work and take internships/work experience during university, then you could meet these right people:

It's more about the network, who do you know rather than what do you know. Within reason if you have the money to go and interact with the right group of people then you get recognised and everyone knows who you are, rather than spending all your free time at this part-time job trying to make money to live.

(Participant 22)

Chapter conclusions

In response to the increasing emphasis placed on individual responsibility in employability by the UK skills policy and the 'new' career discourse, this chapter sought to examine the factors associated with CSM and perceived employability and the extent to which this reflects a self-directed process. To this aim, it examined the role of willingness (H1; job and career preferences, and self-esteem) and opportunities (H2; social and educational background) on the extent to which graduates engage in CSM, and how CSM (H3) and its indicators (H4) relate to perceived employability, using data from survey of 2009/2010 graduates and graduate interviews. Figure 7.1 summarises the findings from this chapter.

Largely in support of H1 and H2, online survey data suggested a role for both willingness (job and career preferences, and self-esteem) and opportunities (social and educational background) in graduates' engagement in CSM. In particular, self-esteem was found to be a strong indicator of both CSM and perceived employability. This effect however was not observed amongst the

interview participants. Self-esteem was only mentioned later in graduates' career histories in relation to experience of underemployment and quality of job transitions and will be further discussed in Chapter Nine. Data from the survey of 2009/2010 graduates suggested a role for the effect of social and educational background on graduates' CSM upon graduation. Nevertheless, this effect was not as clear as that of self-esteem. Interviews clarified this further. Graduates' description of their early career behaviour prior to securing the first job in the interview data strongly suggested a role for educational history, in particular to degree subject, work experience and degree class.

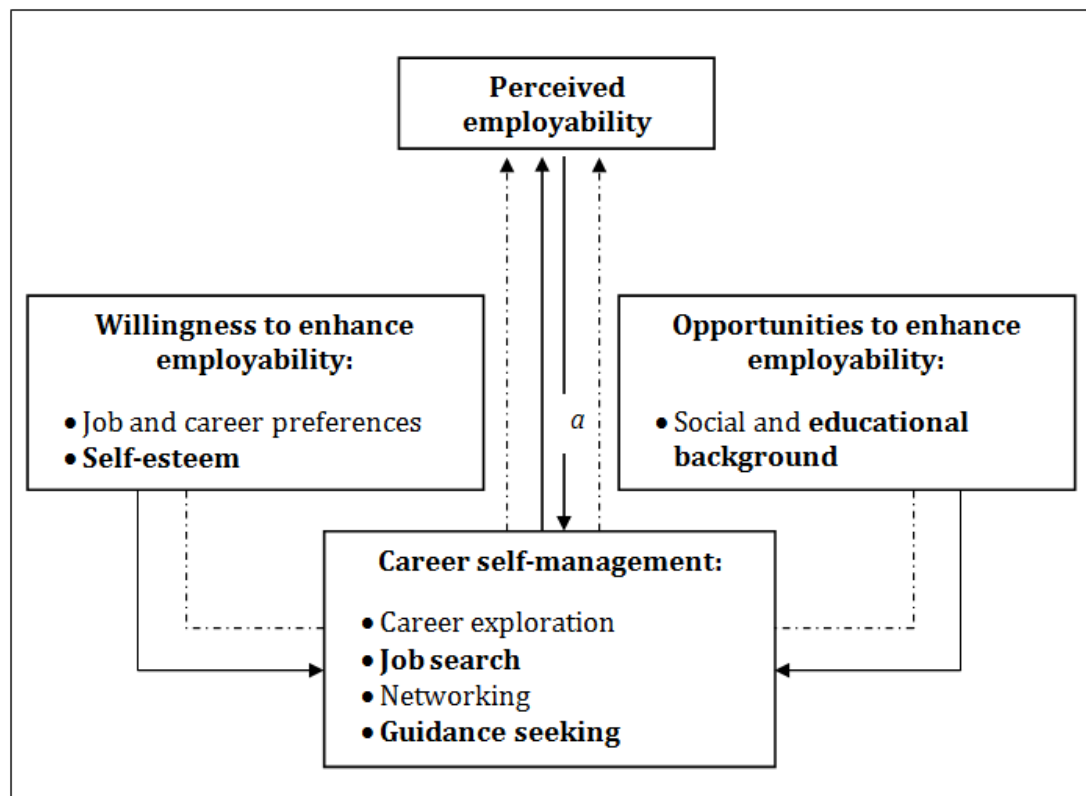
In support of H3, CSM (in particular job search and guidance seeking) was found to be strongly related to perceived employability from both data sources. The findings from the multiple mediation analysis using the survey of 2009/2010 graduates data showed that self-esteem and work experience indirectly enhance perceived employability via job search and guidance seeking (partially supporting H4). Interview data further pointed that this effect may be partially explained by the role of social and educational background, such that graduates from non-professional degree courses revealed a difficulty in both job search and networking, due to the lack of clear career routes in their academic fields. Moreover, degree class and social background, for a minority of graduates, were found to influence perceived employability via CSM amongst the interview participants. Graduates with lower degree classifications and/or those from disadvantaged backgrounds revealed a sense of futility in CSM and

unfavourable employability perceptions attributed to their social and/or educational background.

The interview data suggested that it was the preference clarity rather than the nature of preferences that determined engagement in CSM and perception of employability. Preference clarity here may be likened to self-awareness component of employability, as discussed in Chapter Two. Graduates who had clearer preferences were more likely to engage in CSM and develop more favourable employability perceptions. This suggests a reciprocal relationship between perceived employability and CSM (see Figure 7.1, path *a*).

In satisfying the objective of examining the factors associated with enhancing graduate employability prior to securing the first job and the extent to which this reflects a self-directed process, these findings, from both the survey of 2009/2010 graduates and the graduate interviews, suggest that graduate employability upon graduation is formed as result of a process of CSM which is rooted not only in graduates' willingness but also in their opportunities, based on educational, and to a lesser extent social, background. Chapter Eight next examines the occupational structure of opportunities in the GLM within which graduate employability is translated into employment outcomes. Chapter Ten discusses the theoretical and practical implications of these findings.

Figure 7.1 Findings from online survey and interview data on the self-directedness of employability upon graduation



Note. *a* represents a non-hypothesised reciprocal relationship between perceived employability (in particular self-awareness/career identity component) and CSM that emerged from the interviews.

Chapter Eight

8. FINDINGS II: OCCUPATIONAL BOUNDARIES OF THE GRADUATE LABOUR MARKET

Introduction

Increasing graduate employment in ‘emerging’ occupations, yet little evidence of upgrading by employers to efficiently utilise this highly skilled workforce is observed in the UK (Anderson, 2009; Mason, 2002). Within the debate on what constitutes today’s ‘graduate’ occupations, these have commonly been taken for granted to be employment commensurate with graduates’ knowledge, skills and abilities by government reports (e.g., Kitchen et al., 2008), as employers are assumed to make efficient use of this workforce. In other words, ‘upskilling’ the labour force is assumed to lead to an ‘upskilling’ of occupations. Moreover, on the theoretical side, the ‘new’ career discourse pays scarce attention to job quality as the opportunities are assumed to be virtually limitless and boundaryless. Nevertheless, we know very little as to how work characteristics in these occupations match that in traditional graduate occupations. This is an important gap in our understanding of contemporary graduate careers. Based on this, this chapter aims to examine the occupational boundaries within which graduate careers develop. To this end, it contrasts job quality (H5) and employment-related outcomes (H6) in ‘emerging’ occupations with those in

traditional and non-graduate occupations; and examines the impact of intrinsic work characteristics on employment-related outcomes in comparison to extrinsic work characteristics (H7). (See Table 8.1 for the list of hypotheses tested in this chapter).

Table 8.1 List of hypotheses tested in relation to occupational boundaries of the GLM

<i>Research objective 2: To examine the occupational boundaries within which graduate careers develop</i>	
H5	Job quality (i.e., job complexity, work skills, task discretion, work intensity, training and development opportunities, perceived job security and pay) in 'emerging' graduate occupations will differ from that in traditional and non-graduate occupations.
H6	Employment related outcomes (job satisfaction, organisational commitment, perceived availability of alternatives, career satisfaction and psychological well-being) for graduates in 'emerging' occupations will differ from those for graduates in traditional and non-graduate occupations.
H7	Intrinsic job characteristics that lead to development through the job (i.e., work skills and task discretion) and training and development opportunities provided by the organisation will have a greater impact on graduates' job satisfaction, organisational commitment, perceived availability of alternatives, career satisfaction and psychological well-being than job security and pay.

Using graduate data from the Skills Survey 2006 (SS06), this chapter reports findings from multiple hierarchical regression analyses which examine the effect of occupation ('emerging' graduate occupations as the comparison category) on each aspect of job quality (H5) and employment-related outcomes (H6), and the relative impact of intrinsic work characteristics, in comparison to extrinsic characteristics, on employment related outcomes (regardless of occupation category) (H7). Findings from the analysis of SS06 data are

complemented with qualitative interview data on job quality, job satisfaction and organisational commitment from graduate career histories.

Job quality in 'emerging' graduate occupations

With the aim of testing H5 (i.e., job quality in emerging occupations will differ from that in traditional and non-graduate occupations), this section contrasts job quality (i.e., job complexity, graduateness skills, intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of work) in 'emerging' occupations with those in traditional (managerial and professional) and non-graduate occupations (administrative/secretarial and other low skilled occupations) in determining what graduates do and how this differs from underemployment as it is commonly studied in the literature (i.e., in non-graduate work) and from adequate employment (i.e., in traditional graduate work). The quantitative analyses using the SS06 presented in this section take the unobserved heterogeneity and positional conflict arguments into account and control for graduates' social and educational background. Hence, the inferences made are not due to who works in these occupations but what these occupations offer for graduates.

Job complexity

The first component of job quality analysed in testing H5 is job complexity, reflected in the necessity of a university/postgraduate (PG) degree to get and to do the job and in the learning and training time to be proficient on the job. A binary logistic regression analysis using the SS06 data suggested that in comparison to associate professional occupations, professional occupations

were more likely to require a university degree ($\beta=1.92$, $p<.05$), while administrative/ secretarial ($\beta=.22$, $p<.05$) and other low skilled occupations ($\beta=.34$, $p<.05$) were less likely. The control model's fit with data was significantly improved with the inclusion of occupation in the second step ($\Delta\chi^2=44.28$, $\Delta df=4$, $p<.05$), suggesting that it has an incremental effect on a job's degree requirement. Associate professional occupations did not differ from other occupations in the necessity of a postgraduate degree to get the job ($\Delta\chi^2=5.90$, $\Delta df=4$, $p>.05$). Professional occupations ($\beta=.16$, $p<.05$) were more likely while other low skilled occupations ($\beta=-.11$, $p<.05$) were less likely to require a university degree to do the job, in comparison to associate professional occupations. There were no differences in requirement of a degree to do the job between associate professional occupations, and managerial ($\beta=.03$, $p>.05$) and administrative/secretarial occupations ($\beta=-.03$, $p>.05$) (see Table 8.2).

These findings are also supported by the interview data. Interview participants who worked in intermediate and low skilled occupations were cynical with regards to the necessity of a degree to get and to do the job (e.g., *"The salary was around £17 - £20K, so in that sense maybe but to actually do the job definitely not [a graduate job]"* Participant 5; Job1: Junior buyer). Particularly, for low skilled occupations, there was a general understanding that the degree qualification was perceived as a way of screening out candidates and not actually necessary on the job:

There was an application form and an interview. The degree wasn't on the ad, but they mentioned that they had quite a lot of applicants and the fact that I had a degree and being well educated put me ahead of them. I don't think I'm using my degree skills on the job. (Participant 11; Job4: Administrative assistant)

Other interview participants accept that the degree qualification is not required to do the current job but do not resent this because there is an understanding that this is how the industry works: entry into higher skilled higher paid jobs is based on the university degree and experience of lower skilled 'lousy' jobs. This is reflected in the following account of a runner (non-graduate occupation) for the BBC, where he believes he will not be able to secure better roles in broadcasting if he does not go through with this low skilled job:

I think most of the runners do have a degree but they don't need it for that job. That's their way to the industry. I don't think you'd get a job as a third or second or first assistant director on a proper programme without previous experience either as a runner or a third assistant development. (Participant 10; Job3: Runner)

Amongst those who completed a postgraduate degree (N=18), the common view was that this qualification put them ahead of others in the competition for jobs but it was not really necessary to do the job. This was also the main reason they completed the postgraduate degree in the first place. For instance, this was clearly the case for Participant 19 in her reflection of the intermediate skilled and professional jobs she held until the day of the interview:

I don't think that the masters would be necessary to do any of the jobs but without the masters I wouldn't be able to get accepted for an interview. It was just the credentials.
(Participant 19)

For a small number of participants only (N=5), having completed a postgraduate degree was a requirement both to get and to do the job. These graduates have chosen to work in jobs that are currently in the process of professionalization (e.g., web development) and a postgraduate degree allows specialisation in this niche area of work. There was, however, some disagreement between interview participants as to the necessity of this additional qualification to do the job.

With regards to learning and training time to be proficient on the job, data from SS06 suggests that associate professional occupations require significantly longer to learn the job in comparison to administrative/secretarial ($\beta=-.13$, $p<.05$) and other low skilled occupations ($\beta=-.14$, $p<.05$), but not in comparison to managerial and professional occupations. In terms of training required to do the job well, associate professional occupations required significantly longer than managerial ($\beta=-.17$, $p<.05$) and low skilled occupations ($\beta=-.14$, $p<.05$), but not different from professional and administrative/secretarial occupations (see Table 8.2).

Despite the lack of significant statistical differences on learning and training time with professional occupations in the SS06 analysis, there was a degree of disappointment amongst those interview participants working in associate

professional jobs as to how quickly the 'newness' of the job dies, particularly in comparison to those who started in graduate trainee programmes in large graduate employers. The contrasting accounts of Participant 4 and Participant 16 support this view:

I think that it's got mundane very quickly; it was a routine job and I knew what to expect. So it was just a cycle for me. It wasn't interesting any more after a couple of months. For me it was I've done it and it pays the bills. (Participant 4; Job3: Gallery assistant)

It's a good job in that you get to deal a lot with customers and you learn to deal with people and the operations at different functions. ... That's the good thing about being on a fast track, you get the opportunities that other people doing the same job don't. I was fast track so I was only meant to do associate for two years. (Participant 16; Job1: Management associate)

What also contributed to this difference in training on- and off-the-job to learn the job amongst the interview participants was the knowledge that for those in graduate trainee schemes this was only temporary and that they would be rotated after a certain amount of time spent on the job. Both of these accounts, however, are in stark contrast with the descriptions of those working in low skilled jobs:

It was about having incoming calls from people and dealing with general inquiries with the expectation that you would meet some targets. There really isn't much to learn apart from a few products they have, but even then you can find these online

when you receive a call. It's a soul destroying job. (Participant 26; Job3: Call centre representative)

Table 8.2 Binary logistic and multiple regression analyses comparing job complexity across graduate occupations (N=488)

	Degree to get the job ^c		PG to get the job ^c		Degree to do the job		Time to learn		Training to learn	
	Exp β 1	Exp β 2	Exp β 1	Exp β 2	β 1	β 2	β 1	β 2	β 1	β 2
Age	1.00	1.02	1.01	1.02	-.23**	-.21*	-.03	.01	.01	.05
Female	.86	.90	.77	.78	-.04	-.02	-.08	-.07	.02	.02
Work experience	1.11*	1.06	1.11	1.06	.06	.02	.11*	.08	.04	.03
Organisational tenure	.99	.99	.98	.98	-.03	-.05	.19**	.17*	-.11*	-.11*
Organisation size	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	.00	.02	-.05	-.05	-.01	-.01
Supervisory resp	2.08*	1.80*	1.13	1.06	.05	.04	.10	.10	.09	.11*
Private sector	.80	1.00	.80	.92	-.18**	-.15*	-.17**	-.11*	-.18**	-.14*
PG qualification	2.12**	1.84*	2.91**	1.18**	.03	.01	.01	-.02	-.13*	-.14*
Maths qualification	1.04	1.08	.99	1.01	-.05	-.05	.03	.04	.09	.09
New university	.77	.90	1.28	1.35	.07	.09	-.07	-.05	-.08	-.06
Professional degree subject	1.61*	1.42	2.81*	2.62*	.02	.01	.01	-.01	.00	.00
First/2:1 degree class	1.13	.97	.80	.71	.12*	.11*	.04	.04	-.04	-.05
Social background	1.10	1.04	1.06	1.02	-.09	-.09	.00	-.01	-.02	-.04
<i>Occupation^a</i>										
Managerial		1.04		.29		.03		-.10		-.17*
Professional		1.92*		.42		.16*		.10		.05
Admin/secretarial		.22***		1.40		-.03		-.13*		.02
Other low skilled ^b		.34**		.75		-.11*		-.14*		-.14*
ΔF					1.77*	2.92*	2.47**	4.33**	1.62	3.51**
R ²					.04	.07	.07	.12	.03	.07
ΔR^2						.03		.05		.04
df	13.00	17.00	13.00	17.00						
Model χ^2	41.39	85.67	75.95	81.85						
$\Delta\chi^2$		44.28***		5.90						

Note. Data source: SS06; ^a Reference category is associate professional occupations; ^b Other low skilled occupations: Skilled trades, personal service occupations, sales occupations, machine operatives, and elementary occupations; ^c Binary logistic regression analyses were used for degree and postgraduate degree requirement to get the job, all other analyses were conducted using simple hierarchical regression analyses; R² values reflect adjusted R².

Graduateness skills

The second aspect of job quality analysed in testing H5 (i.e., 'emerging' graduate occupations differ from traditional and non-graduate occupations in job quality) is graduateness skills (i.e., literacy, number, influence, planning, client communication, horizontal communication, problem solving and computer skills) that are important on the job. Using graduate data from SS06, findings from multiple hierarchical regression analyses suggested that, in comparison to associate professional occupations (i) managerial occupations required higher client communication skills ($\beta=.17$, $p<.05$); (ii) professional occupations made use of higher number ($\beta=.19$, $p<.05$), influence ($\beta=.21$, $p<.05$) and planning skills ($\beta=.11$, $p<.05$); (iii) administrative/secretarial occupations used higher number skills ($\beta=.13$, $p<.05$) but lower client communication skills ($\beta=-.11$, $p<.05$); and (iv) other low skilled occupations made use of significantly lower literacy ($\beta=-.11$, $p<.05$), influence ($\beta=-.13$, $p<.05$) and computer skills ($\beta=-.23$, $p<.05$). There were no differences based on occupations on the use of horizontal communication ($\Delta F = .79$, $p>.05$, $\Delta R^2=.00$) and problem solving skills ($\Delta F=1.93$, $p>.05$, $\Delta R^2=.01$). (see Table 8.3 for means and standard deviations for each graduateness skill across occupations; see Table 8.4 for multiple hierarchical regression analyses comparing associate professional occupations with managerial, professional, administrative/secretarial and other low skilled occupations on each graduateness skill).

Amongst the interview participants, skills that made the difference between professional and associate professional jobs (i.e., influence, planning and

number skills) were only mentioned by graduates who did not perceive themselves to be underemployed and, often, who had more than three years of work experience. For instance, for Participant 6, who had progressed from policy assistant to investment coordinator in the Scottish Government where he was in charge of a £83M budget at the time of study, the importance of influence skills in his job were clear:

There is a lot of influence skills that are used with mostly the external colleagues in the organisations, simply because there are a lot of decisions that need to be challenged. Maybe it's a minister that's making the decision, I have to say why and influence people into my way of thinking. I do actually feel like I have the influence to make decisions now. (Participant 6; Job4: Investment coordinator)

Similarly for Participant 1, who was working as a senior researcher at the time of interview, the importance of planning skills and how it increased over time was astonishing:

I've never had to think in the long-term and now I have to. We have to think about short-term research projects and long-term research projects and how it all fits into the 5-year funded post that I have. So there's been a huge amount of planning I had to overcome. (Participant 1; Job4: Researcher)

With regards to the importance of client communication skills for managerial occupations, again, this was a skill that increased with experience in the occupation or organisation. It appears that at the start of their careers, graduates are only auxiliary to dealing with clients (e.g., preparing

presentations for others) but as they gain experience and gain supervisory responsibilities the need to deal with clients individually becomes important.

Participant 9 reveals a good example for this:

I was getting more responsibility. I was dealing more with clients and more face-to-face work with them. Before they were phoning, I was maybe the one talking to them. Now there is a lot more visibility to the client. ... So you're less shielded by your project manager in those aspects because you're expected to be able to make these decisions. And also you're more likely to be sent to a client's site, without having someone to baby-sit you. Rather than going with someone senior, you'd be the person going. (Participant 9; Job3: Consultant)

Lack of differences on horizontal communication and problem solving skills were also apparent in participants' responses during interviews. For instance, interview participants who had taken restaurant/bar jobs have mentioned that these skills were an important part of the job, as well as those who worked in higher skilled jobs. Even though the level of communication or problem solving in lower skilled occupations is relatively lower, participants still identify these as important skills required by the job. This is reflected in the description of importance of problem solving by Participant 8 who started her career in a low skilled box office job and later moved on to a higher position as events coordinator:

It's quite important. If a client wants to do something that really isn't possible for the venue then you just think of a way to overcome that. I would say it's equally important in the box

office. In the box office you're working with the public. In this job [events coordinator] I'm working more with the professionals, like corporate people. So it's the same level of service but different people. (Participant 8)

Similarly for horizontal communication skills, interview participants reported high importance across occupations. For instance, Participant 10, who started his career as a waiter in a restaurant, highlighted the importance of skill in his statement. Yet, similarly Participant 6 puts great emphasis on horizontal communication as part of his second role as information officer:

You need to communicate well with the kitchen because you're the only way that they know what's going on so they can get the meal prepared and stuff like that. (Participant 10)

There was a lot of engaging with different people within the organisation, so it wasn't just directly the people I work with within my team - it was linked with the museums team and the catering team, so many different teams. I also had to speak to members of the public as well, so it's different levels of communication I had to use. (Participant 6; Job2: Information officer)

Figure 8.1 describes the work skills rated by Participant 30 as she moved out of working in a non-graduate job (call centre representative) on to associate professional (training officer) and to a professional/managerial position (HR manager). As observed, the importance of client communication, planning, influence, number and problem solving skills increase over time as she moves from a low skilled job onto an intermediate and later high skilled job.

Confirming the statistical evidence from SS06, however, horizontal communication skills stay stable at a somewhat important level.

Table 8.3 Means and standard deviations for study measures across SOC2000 occupation (N=488)

	Managerial		Professional		Associate professional		Admin/secretarial		Other low skilled ^e		p
	M	S.D.	M	S.D.	M	S.D.	M	S.D.	M	S.D.	
<i>Work skills</i>											
Literacy	3.79	.89	4.06	.92	3.88	.97	3.73	.90	3.20	1.22	d
Number	3.38	1.19	3.48	1.28	2.93	1.32	3.47	1.37	2.55	1.16	b, c
Influence	3.65	.79	3.83	.73	3.40	.82	3.16	.76	2.70	1.02	b, d
Planning	4.49	.58	4.54	.62	4.40	.64	4.30	.65	3.88	.94	b, d
Client communication	4.07	.83	3.78	.70	3.67	.79	3.55	.80	3.62	.90	a, c
Horizontal communication	4.23	.82	4.33	.80	4.31	.79	4.35	.65	4.09	1.04	n.s.
Problem solving	4.19	.79	4.24	.84	4.03	.89	3.93	.90	3.60	1.12	n.s.
Computer	4.05	.77	4.08	.71	4.08	.72	4.07	.56	3.39	1.00	d
<i>Job quality</i>											
Graduateness	3.90	.56	3.99	.49	3.83	.50	3.95	.47	3.57	.58	b, c, d
Perceived skill use	3.11	.94	3.45	.65	3.23	.84	2.84	.83	2.68	1.10	b, c, d
Opportunity for skill use	3.21	.84	3.40	.77	3.23	.82	2.90	.94	2.63	1.00	b, c, d
Task discretion	3.20	.54	3.20	.53	3.29	.58	3.25	.51	3.04	.71	n.s.
Work intensity	-.02	.75	.02	.62	-.02	.73	-.08	.63	-.32	.80	n.s.
Training & development	3.28	.65	3.61	.63	3.52	.69	3.50	.51	3.03	.88	d
Perceived job security	1.82	.39	1.87	.34	1.83	.38	1.76	.43	1.83	.38	n.s.
Pay	£23803	£14348	£23693	£13769	£21472	£14505	£18210	£10307	£12185	£11361	d
<i>Employment related outcomes</i>											
Availability of alternatives	2.44	.77	2.39	.86	2.40	.79	2.51	.79	2.49	.96	n.s.
Job satisfaction	5.08	.79	5.29	.62	5.09	.69	5.24	.84	4.86	1.01	b
Organisational commitment	2.70	.53	2.72	.44	2.58	.45	2.62	.57	2.61	.53	a, b
Career satisfaction	3.49	1.05	3.53	.99	3.38	1.06	3.16	1.18	2.77	1.32	d
Affective well-being	3.90	.79	3.93	.67	3.84	.77	4.07	.81	3.99	.84	n.s.
Negative carry-over	2.84	.99	2.88	1.14	2.73	1.14	2.32	.92	2.51	1.01	c

Note. Data source: SS06; ^a Associate professional occupations significantly different from managerial occupations; ^b Associate professional occupations significantly different from professional occupations; ^c Associate professional occupations significantly different from administrative/secretarial occupations; ^d Associate professional occupations significantly different from other low skilled occupations; ^e Other low skilled occupations: Skilled trades, personal service occupations, sales occupations, machine operatives, and elementary occupations.

Table 8.4 Hierarchical regression analyses comparing associate professional occupations to managerial, professional, administrative/secretarial and other low skilled occupations on graduateness skills (N=488)

	Literacy		Number		Influence		Planning	
	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$
Age	-.05	-.04	-.04	-.04	-.03	-.03	-.08	-.07
Female	-.09	-.09	-.16**	-.15**	-.10*	-.08	.00	.02
Work experience	.16**	.15*	.05	.04	.16**	.13*	.16**	.14*
Organisational tenure	.00	.01	.09	.08	-.01	-.02	-.08	-.09
Organisation size	-.02	-.02	.05	.06	-.02	.00	.01	.03
Supervisory resp	.13*	.13*	.15**	.15**	.32***	.30***	.14**	.11*
Private sector	-.15**	-.12*	.05	.05	-.17***	-.13**		-.20***
PG qualification	.12*	.11*	-.01	-.01	.06	.03	.02	.00
Maths qualification	.04	.05	.09*	.09	.01	.02	.04	.05
New university	-.07	-.06	.02	.03	-.01	.03	-.04	-.02
Prof degree subject	-.05	-.07	.02	.01	-.03	-.06	-.16**	-.13*
First/2:1 degree class	.11*	.10*	.08	.07	.14**	.11*	.06	.04
Social background	.03	.01	.11*	.09*	.07	.06	.10*	.08
<i>Occupation^a</i>								
Managerial		-.09		.06		.05		.07
Professional		.04		.19**		.21***		.11*
Admin/secretarial		-.03		.13*		-.08		-.04
Other low skilled ^b		-.11*		-.01		-.13*		-.11*
ΔF	3.19***	2.48*	3.39***	3.94***	6.80***	1.29***	3.82***	5.48***
R^2	.06	.08	.07	.09	.16	.23	.08	.12
ΔR^2		.02		.02		.07		.04

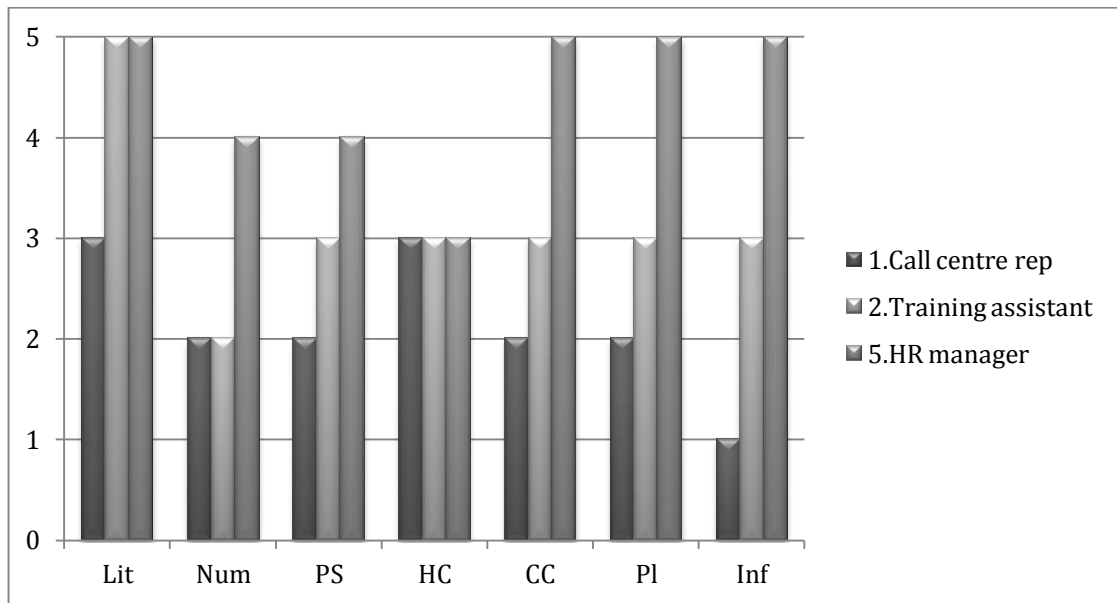
Note. Data source: SS06; ^a Comparison category is associate professional occupations; ^b Other low skilled occupations: Skilled trades, personal service occupations, sales occupations, machine operatives, and elementary occupations; R^2 , adjusted; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 8.4 Continued...

	Client communication		Horizontal communication		Problem solving		Computer	
	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$
Age	.06	.04	-.13*	-.13*	-.02	-.02	-.15*	-.11*
Female	-.01	.01	.08	.07	-.08	-.07	-.22***	-.21***
Work experience	.06	.05	.13*	.13*	.09	.08	.15*	.13*
Organisational tenure	.05	.04	.00	.00	-.04	-.04	-.06	-.06
Organisation size	-.09	-.07	.04	.04	.00	.01	-.02	-.03
Supervisory resp	.03	.00	.16**	.17**	.21***	.20***	.06	.04
Private sector	.05	.03	-.12*	-.12*	.08	.10	.06	.08
PG qualification	-.11*	-.13*	-.01	.00	-.01	-.02	.14**	.12*
Maths qualification	.01	.02	.00	.00	.06	.06	.02	.02
New university	.06	.07	.10*	.10*	.05	.06	-.05	-.03
Prof degree subject	-.03	-.04	-.05	-.05	.06	.04	.02	.03
First/2:1 degree class	.14**	.14**	.13*	.13*	.13*	.12*	.09	.06
Social background	.05	.06	-.01	-.01	.04	.03	.13**	.10**
<i>Occupation^a</i>								
Managerial		.17**		.00		.00		-.06
Professional		.05		.05		.09		-.01
Admin/secretarial		-.11*		.08		-.03		.00
Other low skilled ^b		.05		.06		-.08		-.23***
ΔF	1.86*	4.59***	2.92**	.79	3.34***	1.93	3.86***	5.68***
R ²	.03	.06	.06	.06	.07	.08	.08	.01
ΔR^2		.03		.00		.01		.04

Note. Data source: SS06; ^a Comparison category is associate professional occupations; ^b Other low skilled occupations: Skilled trades, personal service occupations, sales occupations, machine operatives, and elementary occupations; R², adjusted; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001.

Figure 8.1 Differences in gradueness skills between non-graduate and associate professional occupations (evidence from Participant 30)



Note. Data source: Graduate interviews; (1=Not important at all; 2=Not very important; 3=Neither important nor unimportant; Important; 5=Essential); Lit: Literacy; Num: Number; PS: Problem solving; HC: Horizontal communication; CC: Client communication; Pl: Planning; and Inf: Influence skills.

Intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of work in 'emerging' occupations

The third and fourth aspects of job quality analysed in testing the difference between 'emerging', and traditional and non-graduate occupations (H5) are the intrinsic (i.e., gradueness skills, perceived skill use, opportunity for skill use, task discretion, and training and development opportunities) and extrinsic work characteristics (i.e., work intensity, perceived job security and pay). Multiple hierarchical regression analyses using graduate data from SS06 suggested that in comparison to associate professional occupations (i) there were no differences with managerial occupations on any aspect of jobs; (ii) graduates in professional occupations reported significantly higher importance for most intrinsic job aspects (i.e., overall gradueness skill ($\beta=.14$, $p<.05$),

perceived skill use ($\beta=.13$, $p<.05$) and opportunity for skill use ($\beta=.14$, $p<.05$); (iii) administrative occupations used higher gradateness skill ($\beta=.13$, $p<.05$) but graduates reported lower perceived skill use ($\beta=-.10$, $p<.05$) and opportunity for skill use ($\beta=-.11$, $p<.05$); and (iv) other low skilled occupations used significantly lower gradateness skills ($\beta=-.12$, $p<.05$), and reported lower perceived skill use ($\beta=-.16$, $p<.05$), opportunity for skill use ($\beta=-.19$, $p<.05$), training and development opportunities ($\beta=-.19$, $p<.05$) and pay ($\beta=-.21$, $p<.05$). Occupation had no effect over and above that of control variables on graduates' task discretion ($\Delta F=1.35$, $p>.05$, $\Delta R^2=.00$), work intensity ($\Delta F=1.39$, $p>.05$, $\Delta R^2=.00$) and perceived job security ($\Delta\chi^2=5.22$, $\Delta df=4$, $p>.05$) (see Table 8.3 for means and standard deviations for intrinsic and extrinsic aspects across occupations; see Table 8.5 for multiple hierarchical regression analyses comparing associate professional occupations with managerial, professional, administrative/secretarial and other low skilled occupations on these aspects of job quality).

Amongst the interview participants, those in associate professional and lower skilled jobs commonly complained about the repetition and little development involved in the jobs while those in professional/managerial jobs were most content with their jobs being challenging and interesting. For example, Participant 31, who took a 'strategic personnel planner' position, describes how the job did not live up to its title:

My job was basic data analysis. It's probably the job I liked the least. There wasn't a lot of contact outwit the computer. I spent most of my time bored. There were things to do but I spent a lot

of my time trying to encourage my managers to give me a bit more to do. I was actually bored. It was more of an analyst than a planner. There wasn't a lot of strategic planning to do with the job. It was more about running data for other people to do strategic planning. So I didn't really enjoy that job. (Participant 31; Job3: Strategic personnel planning)

This description is similar to Participant 13's description of a research assistant job, where she is unhappy as the job is routine and non-challenging. The common theme in these scripts is a sense of boredom on the job due to lack of challenge and skill use and development, and a certain level of cynicism towards the job title:

I'm working as a research assistant. I started off just doing data entry, which is very boring. I kind of worked my way up doing more statistical work but still very much at a descriptive stage. I haven't really done extensive analyses. ... But that's about it really. I'm also getting very very good at copying and pasting. I think I'm doing the jobs that people don't really want to do themselves. I mean I have done trying to contribute ideas while writing up but this is very minimal. (Participant 13; Job2: Research assistant)

These intermediate skilled jobs, compared to non-graduate low skilled jobs, however, appear to be more 'challenging'. A common and clear lack of skill use and development was observed in the accounts of graduates' descriptions of low skilled work to such an extent that Participant 26 called this "*soul destroying work*" where it was "*as if you should come in and hang up your brain at the door*". Apart from the common non-graduate jobs, such as bar, restaurant

and call centre work, the following script from a graduate who took a temporary HR assistant job describes this further. In the recent 'professionalization' project for HR, this would be a regular basic entry-level job which would act as a stepping stone to a career in this field:

It was primarily data entry and filing. There was also occasional analysing HR matrix but mostly day-to-day stuff was quite menial, data-monkey I used to call it. (Participant 36; Job1: HR assistant)

In comparison to the above description from Participant 36, Participant 28 describes a completely different picture of the same job title, where he developed new skills and knowledge:

That's where I learnt everything. I loved it. It was a challenge, not my biggest challenge. Coming into a job like that where everything is new and you've got to learn on the spot. (Participant 28; Job3: HR assistant)

This difference in job descriptions with regards to skill use and challenge may also be explained by graduates' expectations from work. This was Participant 28's first introduction to HR as an occupation; while Participant 36 had a 1st class honours degree in HRM, followed by an MSc. Hence, Participant 36 believes that the job title was "*overly exaggerated because you're taught about all these high level stuff then you go in and enter data all day*". Nevertheless, this arbitrariness of job titles was also observed at the supposedly higher level occupations, e.g., sales manager and consultants. Below descriptions of the 'consultant' title supports this view further:

I was extremely bored. It was mainly boredom, not seeing any pay progression and understanding that I didn't want to do that in the long-term. It also didn't live up to the way it was sold. They told us that we'd have an opportunity to make a difference in government's decisions it largely wasn't true. (Participant 5; Job2: Consultant)

The role changed in terms that as a consultant you are really meant to be very much responsible for, instead of being responsible for a bit. You may be responsible for a project or responsible for going on-site on your own and talking to as many clients as there are there and dealing with everything that comes with that. You are the face of the company. (Participant 9; Job3: Consultant)

In stark contrast to the above examples from low and intermediate skilled occupations, graduates who started in traditional graduate occupations, particularly in graduate employers as trainees, report increasing skill use and development and a constant feeling of challenge in their work. This challenge is partly due to the higher skilled nature of the job and partly to efforts by immediate managers in developing graduates professionally. The following script from a business degree graduate who moved on to portfolio insurance after starting as a management trainee in a multi-national bank clarifies this:

It's a better job where you get in that office where they taught the top of the bank employees, so you get more exposure to that and I'm dealing with a lot more customer problems. We're doing sector/industry reviews where the bank is exposed because we can see the first times the customers are having a problem, so

I'm getting to see and work with people that are higher up in the bank. So in terms of building a career it helps in getting your name out. I'm finding that already interesting. (Participant 16; Job2: Portfolio insurance)

Graduates working in large graduate employers also report more support from their organisation to develop knowledge and skills beyond those immediately necessary to do the job:

In terms of development, there are certifications, etc that I'm interested in. I would mention it to my business unit director, they would then give you certain time off for study. (Participant 9; Job3: Consultant)

Supporting the findings from the analysis of SS06 data, pay was important for interview participants in low-skilled jobs, as the majority were paid at minimum wage or slightly higher. The script below from Participant 22 describes how pay was part of the 'poorness' of the job, coupled with lack of development and career opportunities at a large mobile phone retailer. For those working in intermediate or high skilled jobs, however, pay came into play after five to ten years of work experience, associated with their expectations outside of work (e.g., mortgage, starting a family, and so on). Participant 30, who got promoted to training consultant, provides a good example for these participants.

Poor, very poor. No progression opportunities. No degree of job recognition. No evaluation of what you've actually done. It was just literally turn up, sell and that's it. They don't even check

whether you've met your targets. ... It was £4.30 an hour we got paid, which is less than minimum wage but it was made up by commission and that was how you made your money. (Participant 22; Job1-Job4: Sales representative)

Because I got recruited internally there wasn't much of a pay rise. That was fine because I was getting experience. But when I started looking for roles in similar organisations the salary was far far different. At the time I must have been 25 - 26, I wanted to buy a house, I wanted to buy a car, so all these are making me think 'actually what am I doing, my skills are worth a lot more'. (Participant 30; Job2: Training consultant)

For non-graduate occupations, social relations at work was commonly cited as a positive aspect of work by interview participants, despite the lack of challenge on the job and low pay. This was particularly the case with graduates who had some call centre experience (e.g., Participant 30, Participant 26 and Participant 33) and experience of administrative work where they worked as part of a team (e.g., Participant 29, Participant 11):

It was a terrible job. I do remember coming in and it paid £10,500 so it was a basic basic entry job. But I enjoyed it in terms of the team I was working with and the products were very simply structured so I was able to get to grips very easily. (Participant 29; Job1: Administrative assistant)

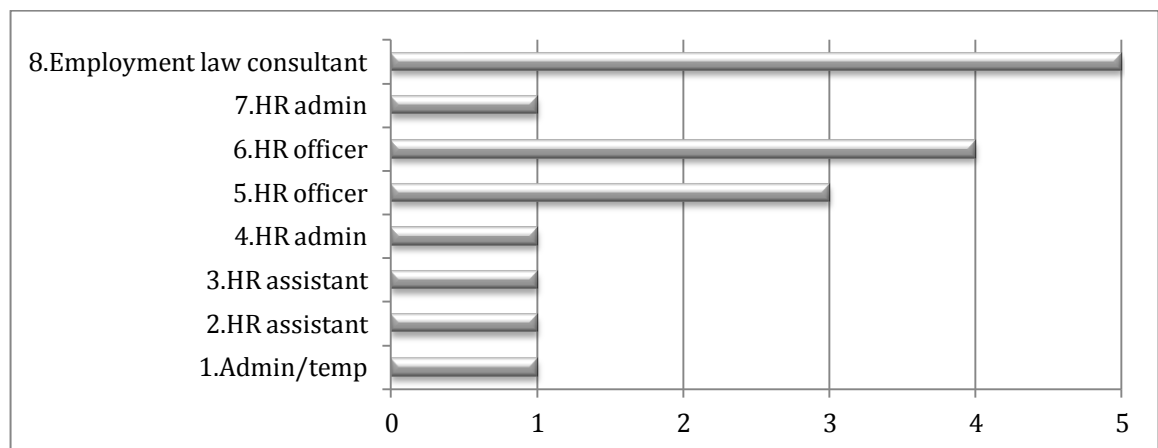
For the great majority of interview participants, task discretion was limited to discretion over the working day rather than discretion over how to do tasks or what tasks to do. This limited task discretion was attributed to the way job was

designed (e.g., Participant 26), the style of the immediate manager or the nature of the job/sector (e.g., *“one thing that frustrates me most in banking is that it's a regulated sector and at times it feels like you're not really using your full brain power if you like”* Participant 16). Nevertheless, despite the lack of statistically significant differences in the SS06 analysis, for those who have secured professional or managerial positions and the self-employed (e.g., Participant 34) there was a degree of task discretion (e.g., *“It's been a really good job in the sense of having much more autonomy than I thought I would have”* Participant 1).

Basically my job was administrative officer. It was extremely routine. That was another job where you'd hang up your brain. There was a cartoon that went around when I worked there. There was a guy sitting at his computer and he starts banging his head on his keyboard and blood starts coming out. I thought that's how I feel. It was all procedural based; they didn't want any independent thought or initiative. They did want you to use a little bit of initiative when you're dealing with concerns, but you did have a flow chart you had to follow. (Participant 26; Job4: Administrative officer)

The differences in task discretion between occupations is also observed in Figure 8.2 where Participant 28, until he secured his first HR officer position (intermediate) was working in low skilled assistance and administration jobs and had little or no task discretion. As he changed jobs from this point forward task discretion afforded to him also increased, except when he had a relapse in his career and had to take another administration job.

Figure 8.2 Changes in task discretion between low, intermediate and high skilled occupations (evidence from Participant 28)



Note. Data source: Graduate interviews.

In general job security was not a defining feature of good jobs for most interview participants. Those who had referred to job security had either experienced redundancies due to the 2008 recession or had a number of temporary contracts and were now wanting a steady job to be able to afford mortgages. This is clearly reflected in Participant 26's account.

There is an understanding that there is a year by year role because it's self-funded. I'm half and half with that. I'm not going to take just any permanent job that comes along. I'm interested in the quality of the role and the work. But because I'm looking to try and buy a house maybe next year, I'm not sure if I can get a mortgage. If I can't get a mortgage I'll have to rent but definitely a part of me thinks that it'd be good to get a permanent contract, pretty much solely tied in with the mortgage. (Participant 26; Job5: Web developer)

With regards to work intensity, interview participants working in low skilled as well as those in higher skilled jobs reported that high effort was part of their

job. The difference between occupations was that in the former it was commonly an expectation on the part of the employer while in the latter it was still an expectation but also at the discretion of the employee that they work extra hours or put in extra effort into their work. This is reflected in the contrasting descriptions of Participant 10 (who worked in a restaurant) and Participant 20 (who works for a graduate employer):

There is one thing with the catering industry is that your employer is not willing to accept that you can be standing and not doing anything. You can never be standing and not doing anything. ... When it's busy you're always busy but when the place isn't busy you're still always doing something. (Participant 10)

I'm contracted to work 37.5 hours, I'd say I work fairly regularly 55 to 60 hours. There is no overtime work. Sometimes the extra work is the extra stuff that I've made out of my core job, like the recruitment stuff I do at Strathclyde is not a part of my job. ... Very often there is not enough time at certain places in the projects. So at certain points some things may go wrong or someone's gone offset. Other times I've started the company at the management level so there is an expectation there that management will do more work. (Participant 20)

Hypothesis testing for H5 (i.e., job quality in 'emerging' occupations will differ from that in traditional and non-graduate occupations) largely found support in this section. The findings show that differences in job complexity, gradueness skills, and intrinsic aspects of work differentiate 'emerging' occupations from traditional and non-graduate occupations.

Table 8.5 Hierarchical regression analyses comparing aspects of job quality across graduate occupations (N=488)

	Graduateness		Skill use		Opportunity for skill use		Task discretion	
	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$
Age	-.06	-.04	-.02	-.01	-.01	.01	.04	.06
Female	-.07	-.06	.06	.07	-.07	-.06	.02	.02
Work experience	.13*	.10	.16**	.12*	.11*	.06	.05	.04
Organisational tenure	.03	.02	-.17**	-.17**	-.04	-.05	.00	.00
Organisation size	.01	.01	-.06	-.05	-.05	-.03	.07	.06
Supervisory resp	.17***	.15**	.18***	.15**	.16**	.12*	.05	.04
Private sector	-.11*	-.10*	-.14**	-.09*	-.10*	-.06	-.03	-.01
PG qualification	.01	.00	-.06	-.08	.01	-.03	-.06	-.06
Maths qualification	.05	.04	-.06	-.05	.05	.07	.03	.03
New university	.06	.08	.03	.06	.01	.04	.10*	.10*
Prof degree subject	.00	-.02	.02	-.01	-.07	-.10*	-.03	-.03
First/2:1 degree class	.17***	.15**	.10*	.08	.05	.02	.13*	.12*
Social background	.05	.02	.12*	.09	.09*	.07	.05	.03
<i>Occupation^a</i>								
Managerial		.04		-.03		.03		-.07
Professional		.14**		.13*		.14*		-.08
Admin/secretarial		.13*		-.10*		-.11*		-.01
Other low skilled ^b		-.12*		-.16**		-.19***		-.13*
ΔF	3.45***	6.20***	4.41***	7.18***	2.18*	9.02***	1.56	1.35
R^2	.07	.11	.09	.14	.03	.10	.02	.02
ΔR^2		.04		.05		.07		.00
df								
Model χ^2								
$\Delta \chi^2$								

Note. Data source: SS06; Binary logistic regression analyses were used for job security; all other analyses were conducted using simple hierarchical regression analyses; ^a Reference category is associate professional occupations; ^b Other low skilled occupations: Skilled trades, personal service occupations, sales occupations, machine operatives, and elementary occupations; R^2 values reflect adjusted R^2 ; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 8.5 continued...

	Work intensity		Training & development		Pay		Job security	
	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	Exp $\beta 1$	Exp $\beta 2$
Age	-.10*	-.10*	-.19**	-.16**	.03	.05	.97	.96
Female	.04	.04	.00	-.01	-.06	-.04	.91	.93
Work experience	.15**	.13*	.22***	.18**	.07	.02	1.07	1.07
Organisational tenure	-.04	-.04	-.04	-.04	-.02	-.03	1.08	1.08
Organisation size	.00	.00	.05	.05	.00	.01	1.00	1.00
Supervisory resp	.12*	.11*	.12*	.10*	.19***	.14**	1.05	1.07
Private sector	-.11*	-.10*	-.15**	-.11*	-.10*	-.07	.60	.64
PG qualification	-.10*	-.11*	-.04	-.05	-.01	-.04	.52*	.47*
Maths qualification	.02	.02	-.04	-.04	.09*	.09*	1.09	1.12
New university	.02	.03	.06	.08	-.04	-.01	.97	.98
Prof degree subject	.00	.00	.05	.03	.03	.02	.79	.71
First/2:1 degree class	.15**	.14**	.06	.03	.06	.03	.83	.82
Social background	.10*	.09*	.09*	.05	.11*	.08	1.17	1.20
<i>Occupation^a</i>								
Managerial		.01		-.09		.04		1.24
Professional		.06		.09		.06		.49
Admin/secretarial		.03		.02		-.05		1.39
Other low skilled ^b		-.08		-.19***		-.21***		.95
ΔF	3.40***	1.39	3.27***	7.32***	2.84**	6.67***		
R ²	.07	.07	.06	.12	.05	.10		
ΔR^2		.00		.06		.05		
df							13	17
Model χ^2							16.71	21.93
$\Delta \chi^2$								5.22

Note. Data source: SS06; Binary logistic regression analyses were used for job security; all other analyses were conducted using simple hierarchical regression analyses; ^a Reference category is associate professional occupations; ^b Other low skilled occupations: Skilled trades, personal service occupations, sales occupations, machine operatives, and elementary occupations; R² values reflect adjusted R²; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001.

Employment-related outcomes in ‘emerging’ occupations

With the aim of testing H6 (i.e., Employment-related outcomes for graduates in ‘emerging’ graduate occupations will differ from those in traditional graduate occupations and non-graduate occupations), this section contrasts employment-related outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction, organisational commitment, perceived availability of alternatives, career satisfaction and psychological well-being) in ‘emerging’ occupations with those in traditional (managerial and professional) and non-graduate occupations (administrative/secretarial and other low skilled occupations). Moreover, it examines the impact of intrinsic aspects of work, in comparison to extrinsic aspects, on graduates’ employment related outcomes (H7). The quantitative analyses using the SS06 presented in this section take the unobserved heterogeneity and positional conflict arguments into account and control for graduates’ social and educational background. Hence, the inferences made are not due to who works in these occupations but what these occupations offer for graduates.

Testing for H6 (i.e., differences in employment-related outcomes in ‘emerging’ occupations in comparison to traditional and non-graduate occupations), hierarchical regression analyses using the graduate data from SS06 showed that in comparison to graduates in associate professional occupations, (i) graduates in managerial occupations reported higher organisational commitment ($\beta=.10$, $p<.05$); (ii) those in professional occupations reported significantly higher job satisfaction ($\beta=.14$, $p<.05$) and organisational commitment ($\beta=.14$, $p<.05$); and

(iii) graduates in associate professional occupations reported higher career satisfaction ($\beta = -.21$, $p < .05$) yet more negative carry-over from work ($\beta = -.11$, $p < .05$) in comparison to those in lower skilled occupations. There were no differences between graduates in associate professional occupations and those in (i) professional/managerial occupations with regards to career satisfaction and negative carry-over from work; (ii) low skilled occupations on job satisfaction or organisational commitment; and (iii) traditional and non-graduate occupations on perceived availability of alternatives and psychological well-being. (see Table 8.2 for means and standard deviations; see Table 8.6 for multiple hierarchical regression analysis comparing 'emerging' occupations with managerial, professional, administrative/secretarial and other low skilled occupations on employment-related outcomes).

Further hierarchical analyses (see Table 8.7) were conducted with the SS06 graduate data to ensure that the occupational differences in employment-related outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction, organisational commitment, career satisfaction and negative carry-over from work) were in fact attributable to differences in job quality across occupations. This analysis controlled for the effect of occupational category by including occupational dummy variables (i.e., managerial, professional, admin/secretarial and other low skilled occupations, in comparison to 'emerging' graduate occupations) in Step 2, followed by aspects of job quality in Step 3. This showed that occupational differences in employment-related outcomes, except for those in negative carry-over from work, were in fact attributable to differences in job quality. More specifically,

the significant differences in job satisfaction ($\beta=0.07$, $p>.05$) and organisational commitment ($\beta=0.09$, $p>.05$) due to working in professional occupations in comparison to associate professional occupations disappeared with the inclusion of job quality variables. Additionally, part of the difference in career satisfaction between associate professional and non-graduate occupations was attributable to job quality, as the effect of working in low skilled occupations in comparison to associate professional occupations was reduced from $\beta=-.21$ ($p<.05$) to $\beta=-.13$ ($p<.05$). Moreover, inclusion of job quality variables substantially increased the variance explained (R^2) in job satisfaction ($\Delta R^2 = 0.23$), organisational commitment ($\Delta R^2 = 0.16$), career satisfaction ($\Delta R^2 = 0.12$) and, to a lesser extent, negative carry-over from work ($\Delta R^2 = 0.04$). Job quality, however, did not explain the higher organisational commitment observed in graduates working in managerial occupations, in comparison to associate professional occupations or the higher negative carry-over from work that was observed amongst those working in associate professional occupations in comparison to those in non-graduate occupations.

In partial support of H7 (i.e., intrinsic work characteristics will have a higher impact on employment-related outcomes, in comparison to extrinsic work characteristics), intrinsic aspects of job quality (i.e., gradueness skills, perceived skill use, opportunity for skill use, task discretion and training and development opportunities) overall accounted for more variance in job satisfaction ($\Delta R^2=.19$), organisational commitment ($\Delta R^2=.12$), career satisfaction ($\Delta R^2=.16$) and psychological well-being ($\Delta R^2=.07$), in comparison to

extrinsic aspects (i.e., work intensity, perceived job security and pay) which accounted for more variance in negative carry-over from work ($\Delta R^2=.03$) (see Table 8.8). More specifically, based on significant increments in variance (i.e., ΔR^2), (i) job satisfaction was positively related to opportunity for skill use ($\beta=.35, p<.05$), task discretion ($\beta=.14, p<.05$) and perceived job security ($\beta=.24, p<.05$); (ii) organisational commitment was predicted by perceived skill use ($\beta=.12, p<.05$), opportunity for skill use ($\beta=.12, p<.05$), task discretion ($\beta=.13, p<.05$) and job security ($\beta=.19, p<.05$); (iii) career satisfaction was positively related to perceived skill use ($\beta=.26, p<.05$), opportunity for skill use ($\beta=.24, p<.05$), and perceived job security ($\beta=.12, p<.05$); (iv) psychological well-being was positively associated with perceived skill use ($\beta=.10, p<.05$), opportunity for skill use ($\beta=.14, p<.05$), task discretion ($\beta=.21, p<.05$) and perceived job security ($\beta=.18, p<.05$); and (v) negative carry-over from work was negatively related to task discretion ($\beta=-.12, p<.05$) and perceived job security ($\beta=-.13, p<.05$), and positively to work intensity ($\beta=.14, p<.05$). Overall, these findings show an important role for skill use, task discretion and job security in employment-related outcomes for graduates.

Largely supporting the findings from SS06 graduate data, interviews suggested that job satisfaction was closely related to development through the job (i.e., using and developing skills on the job, training and development and career opportunities provided). Shedding light onto the lack of job satisfaction differences between managerial and associate professional occupations, the majority of interview participants in both category of occupations were

concerned with the repetition and lack of intellectual stimulation in their jobs. This lack of differences may again be explained by the somewhat arbitrary labelling of occupations. A clear example of this was in Participant 21's description of his dissatisfaction of his first job as a sales manager:

I can recognise that for the type of job as it is, it was a good job and it paid well but overall it wasn't satisfying. It wasn't intellectually demanding so you go through the motions to do things. (Participant 21; Job1: Sales manager)

In contrast to this, those in professional occupations commonly refer to development, stimulation and variety in their jobs in relation to their satisfaction with the job:

It's the opportunities for development. I've been quite lucky in my first year. I got a lot of opportunities for development and to do lots of travelling as well. They allow you to tailor your career to what you're interested in rather than saying this is what you are going to do. So I like that, that flexibility in the areas that you can work in. (Participant 24)

Another common theme that related to job satisfaction amongst the interview participants was development through relations at work. In particular, relations with the manager and the team that led way to professional development influenced job satisfaction via their effects on graduates' confidence in their abilities:

I hate my boss... Because she's a bad manager and she undervalues me enormously. There is so many things that I'm not getting used for, it's unbelievable. It's like a chicken and egg thing. You need to get out to get your confidence, but you need the confidence to get out. (Participant 32)

While managers' role in job satisfaction was more concerned with guidance and development, for some interview participants, particularly in higher skilled, more complex jobs that require a longer learning time, working with team members who were willing to help had a major role in job satisfaction.

So I had that off-the-job training but the best training that I had was on the job from these very good team members for my development. The second year of that first job I was working with some guys who were able to sort of teach me the best and good practices, loopholes and so on. (Participant 9)

Interview data suggested that organisational commitment was associated with graduates' perception of the fairness of organisational policies and practices, the organisational culture in general and the values the organisation stands for rather than job quality. Participants were reluctant to state that they were committed to organisations when they perceived their employers were being unfair, particularly with regards to their own career development and pay. Being treated professionally and with respect had a great impact on organisational commitment for most participants.

Amongst the interview participants, there were stark differences in organisational commitment of graduates based on sector. For some

participants, the bureaucracy of the public sector and decisions not being made in a timely way was effective while for others it was the values of the organisation and how it contributes to the society that made the difference in organisational commitment. Two contrasting accounts below from Participant 28 (who moved onto public sector after experience in private sector) and Participant 2 (who aspires a career as a politician and has experience in the voluntary sector) demonstrate this difference.

I hated it. No decisions were ever made. Nobody wanted to take ownership of anything which was just absolutely driving me crazy. They wouldn't take responsibility for anything. It just got to the point that my manager was actually becoming an obstacle to my job. I was disappointed. (Participant 28)

From the moment I dared to have a political thought all the way to the present day, anti-racism and by extension the equality agenda as been recognised today has been a constant. ... Scottish Refugee Council came up and it fed into everything that I value. Yes, it's a great organisation working for vulnerable clients. (Participant 2)

Social relations at work also had an important role in determining organisational commitment for a substantial minority of interview participants. For some, it was the affiliation and social relations gained through the experience of work that increased commitment to the organisation. Although in some cases, such as Participant 5, where she was very dissatisfied and disappointed with the nature of the job, this organisational commitment was not strong enough to retain her. For others, (e.g., Participant 6) social relations

at work and the networks that came with it boosted confidence professionally and reinforced commitment.

I felt sad when I left. You feel like you're betraying them because they gave you your first job and they gave you a start in your career. There was a certain kind of emotional attachment to them, almost like an obligation. (Participant 5)

Being in the organisation for a while, I know people and it gives me a wee bit of confidence. I don't know all the answers but I know where to go and get. I feel valued and it's a good way to feel because it gives you confidence in your job. (Participant 6)

Table 8.6 Hierarchical regression analyses comparing associate professional occupations to managerial, professional, administrative/secretarial and other low skilled occupations on employment-related outcomes (N=488)

	Availability of alternatives		Job satisfaction		Organisational commitment	
	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$
Age	-.10	-.10	.00	.01	.07	.05
Female	-.04	-.04	-.07	-.07	.02	.03
Work experience	-.01	.00	.08	.05	.07	.05
Organisational tenure	-.05	-.05	-.01	-.02	-.13*	-.13*
Organisation size	.02	.02	.02	.03	-.02	.00
Supervisory responsibility	.01	.02	.13**	.12*	.10*	.09*
Private sector	.12*	.12*	-.01	.01	.05	.05
PG qualification	.01	.02	-.03	-.04	-.02	-.03
Maths qualification	.10*	.09*	-.02	-.01	-.09*	-.09*
New university	-.01	-.02	.01	.03	.01	.01
Professional degree subject	.08	.08	-.03	-.05	-.03	-.04
First/2:1 degree class	.02	.02	.02	.00	.08	.07
Social background	.02	.02	.21***	.19***	.09*	.08
<i>Occupation^a</i>						
Managerial		.00		.00		.10*
Professional		.02		.14*		.14*
Admin/secretarial		.03		.05		.03
Other low skilled ^b		.04		-.08		.03
ΔF	1.91*	.21	2.56**	3.59**	2.83**	3.64**
R^2	.02	.02	.04	.07	.02	.06
ΔR^2		.00		.03		.04

Note. Data source: SS06; ^a Reference category is associate professional occupations; ^b Other low skilled occupations: Skilled trades, personal service occupations, sales occupations, machine operatives, and elementary occupations; R^2 values reflect adjusted R^2 ; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 8.6 continued...

	Career satisfaction		Well-being		Negative carry over	
	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$
Age	-.06	-.03	.11	.10	-.10	-.10
Female	-.03	-.02	-.16**	-.16**	.10*	.10*
Work experience	.15*	.10*	-.02	-.01	.03	.01
Organisational tenure	.00	-.01	-.03	-.04	-.06	-.07
Organisation size	.00	.01	-.01	.00	-.06	-.05
Supervisory responsibility	.11*	.07	.02	.03	.14**	.11*
Private sector	.01	.03	.00	-.01	-.07	-.05
PG qualification	-.01	-.04	-.03	-.03	.03	.01
Maths qualification	.00	.01	.03	.03	-.02	-.01
New university	.13*	.15**	.00	.00	-.08	-.07
Professional degree subject	.04	.03	-.05	-.05	.01	-.01
First/2:1 degree class	.12*	.10*	-.03	-.03	-.02	-.03
Social background	.03	.00	.17**	.17**	-.10*	-.10*
<i>Occupation^a</i>						
Managerial		.02		.02		.03
Professional		.06		.06		.08
Admin/secretarial		-.06		.07		-.11*
Other low skilled ^b		-.21***		.06		-.06
ΔF	2.12*	5.94***	2.19*	.53	2.14*	2.84*
R ²	.03	.08	.03	.03	.03	.05
ΔR^2		.05		.00		.02

Note. Data source: SS06; ^a Reference category is associate professional occupations; ^b Other low skilled occupations: Skilled trades, personal service occupations, sales occupations, machine operatives, and elementary occupations; R² values reflect adjusted R²; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001.

Table 8.7 Hierarchical regression analyses testing the mediating role of job quality on the relationship between occupation and employment-related outcomes (N=488)

	Job satisfaction			Organisational commitment			Career satisfaction			Negative carry-over		
	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 3$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 3$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 3$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 3$
Age	.00	.01	.02	.06	.05	.07	-.05	-.03	-.02	-.08	-.08	-.07
Female	-.07	-.07	-.05	.02	.03	.02	-.03	-.02	-.03	.10*	.10*	.10*
Work experience	.09	.06	.01	.07	.05	-.01	.15*	.10*	.05	.03	.00	.00
Organisational tenure	-.01	-.02	-.01	-.13*	-.13*	-.11*	.00	-.01	.03	-.07	-.08	-.06
Organisation size	.02	.02	.02	-.02	.00	-.01	.00	.01	.02	-.06	-.04	-.03
Supervisory resp	.13*	.12*	.06	.10*	.09	.04	.11*	.07	.01	.13**	.10*	.08
Private sector	-.02	.01	.06	.05	.05	.10*	.01	.04	.08	-.07	-.05	-.04
PG qualification	-.04	-.05	.00	-.02	-.03	.03	-.01	-.04	.01	.03	.00	-.01
Maths qualification	.00	.00	-.03	-.08	-.08	-.09*	-.01	-.01	-.02	-.02	-.01	-.01
New university	.01	.03	-.01	.00	.01	-.03	.13*	.15**	.13**	-.09	-.08	-.06
Professional degree subject	-.02	-.04	.01	-.02	-.04	.00	.03	.01	.04	.00	-.02	-.03
First/2:1 degree class	.02	.00	-.03	.07	.07	.05	.12*	.10*	.09	-.01	-.02	-.04
Social background	.21***	.19***	.14**	.08	.08	.03	.03	.01	-.04	-.10*	-.10*	-.10*
Managerial ^a		-.01	.00		.10*	.10*		.03	.03		.04	.01
Professional ^a		.14*	.07		.14*	.09		.07	.00		.08	.06
Admin/secretarial ^a		.04	.04		.03	.09		-.06	.00		-.11*	-.11*
Other low skilled ^{a b}		-.08	.01		.03	.03		-.21***	-.13*		-.08	-.07
Graduateness			.05			-.08			-.03			.04
Perceived skill use			.06			.12*			.23***			.02
Opportunity for skill use			.36***			.26***			.22***			.01
Task discretion			.15**			.15**			.00			-.14**
Work intensity			-.02			.04			.00			.14**
Training & development			.04			.11*			.02			-.06
Perceived job security			.24***			.20***			.13**			-.14**
Pay			-.08			-.06			.02			.05
ΔF	2.59*	3.35**	18.13***	1.77*	3.64*	11.66**	2.19**	5.99***	8.99***	2.13*	3.44**	3.17**
R ²	.04	.07	.3	.02	.06	.22	.03	.08	.20	.03	.05	.09
ΔR^2		.03	.23		.04	.16		.05	.12		.03	.04

^aNote. Data source: SS06; ^a Reference category is associate professional occupations; ^b Other low skilled occupations: Skilled trades, personal service occupations, sales occupations, machine operatives, and elementary occupations; R² values reflect adjusted R²; * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001.

Table 8.8 Hierarchical regression analyses testing the relative contribution of aspects of job quality to employment-related outcomes (N=488)

	Job satisfaction			Organisational commitment			Availability of alternatives		
	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 3$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 3$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 3$
Age	.01	.01	.03	.07	.08	.09	-.10	-.10	-.09
Female	-.07	-.04	-.04	.02	.02	.02	-.04	-.04	-.04
Work experience	.08	.01	.00	.06	.00	-.02	.00	.01	.01
Organisational tenure	-.01	.01	-.01	-.13*	-.09*	-.10*	-.05	-.05	-.06
Organisation size	.02	.03	.02	-.02	-.01	-.01	.02	.02	.02
Supervisory resp	.13**	.04	.05	.10*	.03	.04	.01	.02	.01
Private sector	-.01	.04	.06	.05	.11*	.11*	.12*	.12*	.12*
PG qualification	-.03	-.02	.00	-.02	.00	.03	.01	.01	.01
Maths qualification	-.01	-.03	-.03	-.09*	-.09*	-.09*	.10*	.10*	.09*
New university	.02	-.01	-.01	.00	-.02	-.02	-.01	.00	.00
Professional degree subject	-.02	.00	.01	-.02	-.01	.00	.09	.08	.08
First/2:1 degree class	.02	-.04	-.03	.08	.04	.04	.01	.02	.02
Social background	.21***	.16***	.15***	.08	.03	.03	.01	.02	.01
Graduateness		.07	.08		-.04	-.06		.01	-.02
Perceived skill use		.06	.06		.12*	.12*		.00	.00
Opportunity for skill use		.36***	.35***		.26***	.12*		-.07	-.08
Task discretion		.13**	.14**		.13**	.13**		-.05	-.05
Training & development		.04	.06		.08	.10		-.01	-.01
Work intensity			-.01			.04			.01
Perceived job security			.24***			.19***			.07
Pay			-.08			-.07			.05
ΔF	2.58**	21.98***	12.39***	1.81*	13.80***	7.19***	1.95*	.65	.97
R^2	.05	.24	.30	.02	.16	.20	.02	.02	.02
ΔR^2		.19	.06		.12	.08		.00	.00

Note. Data source: SS06; R^2 values reflect adjusted R^2 ; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Figure 8.8 continued...

	Career satisfaction			Well-being			Carry-over		
	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 3$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 3$	$\beta 1$	$\beta 2$	$\beta 3$
Age	-.05	-.04	-.04	.09	.08	.08	-.08	-.07	-.07
Female	-.03	-.03	-.02	-.16**	-.16**	-.16**	.10*	.10*	.10*
Work experience	.15*	.07	.07	-.01	-.04	-.04	.03	.01	.01
Organisational tenure	.00	.05	.04	-.03	-.01	-.02	-.07	-.07	-.05
Organisation size	.00	.03	.03	-.01	-.01	-.01	-.06	-.04	-.04
Supervisory resp	.11*	.02	.02	.02	-.02	-.01	.13**	.11**	.09
Private sector	.01	.07	.08	.00	.02	.03	-.07	-.06	-.06
PG qualification	-.01	.00	.02	-.03	-.02	.00	.03	.02	.02
Maths qualification	.00	.01	.00	.03	.03	.03	-.02	-.02	-.02
New university	.13*	.12*	.12*	.01	-.01	-.01	-.09	-.09	-.08
Professional degree subject	.04	.05	.05	-.04	-.02	-.02	.00	.00	-.01
First/2:1 degree class	.12*	.08	.09	-.04	-.07	-.06	-.01	-.02	-.03
Social background	.03	-.03	-.04	.17**	.14**	.14**	-.10*	-.10*	-.10*
Graduateness		.01	-.01		-.04	-.02		.09	.03
Perceived skill use		.26***	.26***		.10*	.10*		.05	.05
Opportunity for skill use		.24***	.24***		.14***	.14***		.05	.04
Task discretion		.00	.01		.21***	.21***		-.12*	-.12*
Training & development		.01	.01		-.03	-.02		-.04	-.05
Work intensity			.01			-.07			.14*
Perceived job security			.12**			.18***			-.13*
Pay			.03			-.04			.08
ΔF	2.08*	17.14***	2.49*	2.15*	7.78***	5.96**	2.05*	1.83	5.89**
R^2	.03	.19	.20	.03	.11	.14	.03	.04	.07
ΔR^2		.16	.01		.07	.03		.01	.03

Note. Source: SS06; R^2 values reflect adjusted R^2 ; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Chapter conclusions

In contributing to this research's overarching aim of understanding contemporary graduate careers, this chapter examined the occupational boundaries within which graduate careers realise. In doing so, using data from the SS06 and graduate interviews, it contrasted job quality (H5) and employment-related outcomes (H6) in 'emerging' graduate occupations with those in traditional and non-graduate occupations. Moreover, in understanding the important characteristics of work in today's graduate occupations, it compared the impact of intrinsic work characteristics on employment-related outcomes to that of extrinsic work characteristics (H7). Findings show significant differences between 'emerging', and traditional and non-graduate occupations in job quality and employment related outcomes, largely attributable to intrinsic features of work.

In support of H5, the analyses in this chapter showed that particularly in job complexity, work skills and intrinsic aspect of work that lead way to development through the job there were differences between 'emerging' occupations, and traditional and non-graduate occupations. H6 was partially supported. Crucial differences were observed (i) in job satisfaction and organisational commitment for graduates in 'emerging' occupations, in comparison to those in traditional graduate occupations; and (ii) in career satisfaction and negative carry-over from work in comparison to those in non-graduate occupations. Further analyses using SS06, and supported by interview data, suggested that these differences in employment-related outcomes were

largely attributable to differences in job quality, in particular due to skill use, task discretion and job security. Partially supporting H7 (i.e., intrinsic work characteristics will have a greater effect on employment-related outcomes for graduates than extrinsic work characteristics) intrinsic work characteristics were found to explain more variance in job satisfaction, organisational commitment, career satisfaction and well-being. Extrinsic work characteristics only explained greater variance in negative carry-over from work, while perceived availability of alternatives was not predicted by neither category of work characteristics.

In understanding contemporary graduate careers, supporting the conceptual analysis presented in Chapter Three, these findings suggest that the GLM may be more segmented today to include traditional, non-graduate and 'emerging' graduate occupations. 'Emerging' graduate occupations appear to form a grey segment which is different from the upper and higher ends of the GLM in terms of job quality and employment-related outcomes, due to the differences in intrinsic work characteristics offered by these occupations. Bringing the evidence from Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight together, Chapter Nine next explores graduate career mobility, in particular graduates' entry into and movement out of early underemployment and the effects of this experience in career mobility and outcomes in the first ten years of employment. Chapter Ten discusses the theoretical and practical implications of these findings.

Chapter Nine

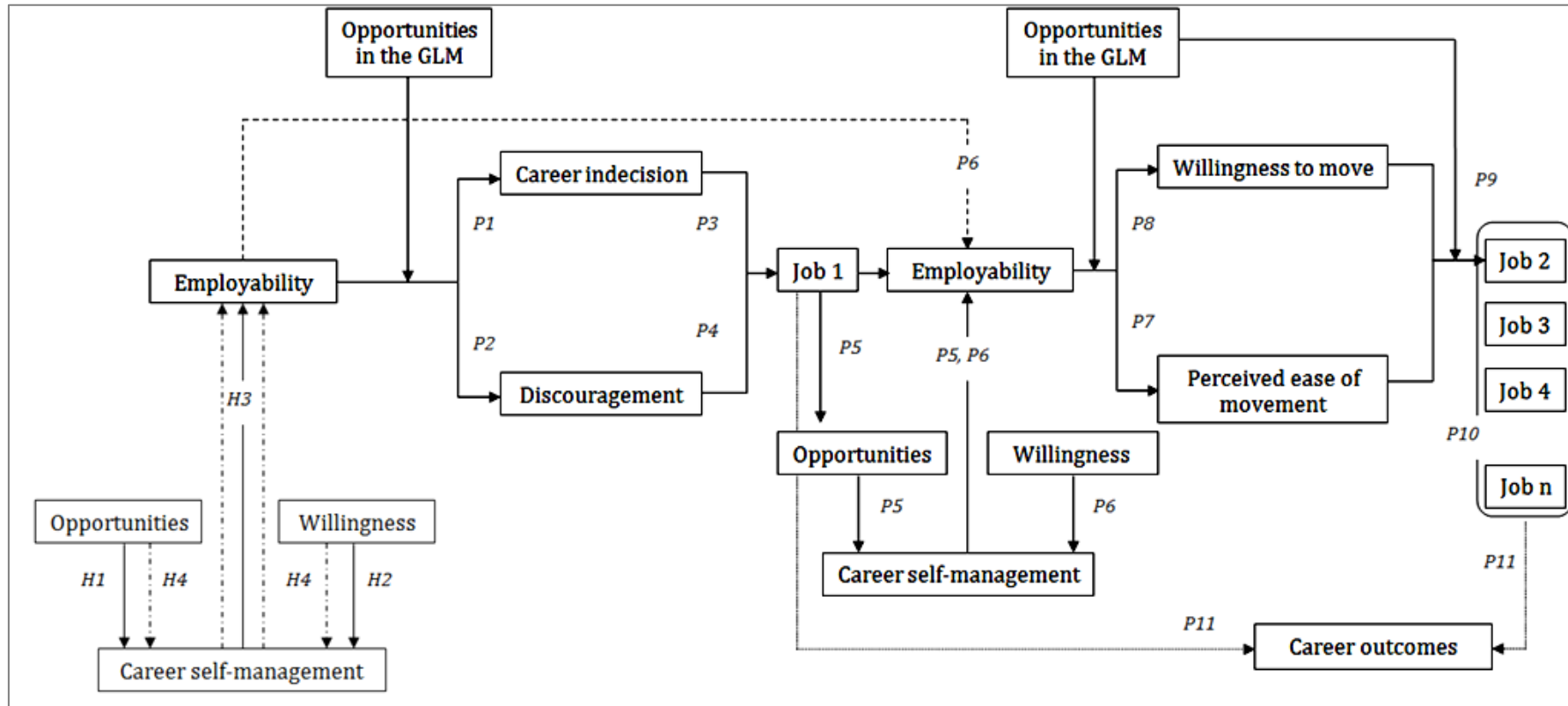
9. FINDINGS III: GRADUATE CAREER MOBILITY

Introduction

Despite being treated as a temporary 'transitional' phase in graduate careers, graduate underemployment has received scant attention from a career mobility perspective. The evidence in Chapter Seven suggested that graduate employability upon graduation is formed as a result of a process of engaging CSM which is determined not only by an individual's willingness (preferences and self-esteem) but also by his/her opportunities (based on social and educational background). Moreover, findings in Chapter Eight point to a segmented GLM which comprises of traditional, 'emerging' and non-graduate occupations which are differentiated based on differences in job quality and employment-related outcomes, attributable to the differences in intrinsic features of jobs that give way to employee development. These findings imply great variability in the individual and structural components of graduate career mobility. Nevertheless, the process through which graduates enter into and move out of underemployment and how this affects later career mobility and outcomes is largely left unexplored.

This chapter aims to explore career mobility for graduates who start their careers in underemployment. In exploring graduates' entry into underemployment, it tests the proposition that perceived employability will be associated with career indecision (P1) and discouragement from the GLM (P2), if the opportunities in the GLM are limited; and that career indecision (P3) and discouragement from the GLM (P4) are likely to result in underemployment in the first job. With regard to movement out of underemployment, it tests the proposition that underemployment in the first job negatively effects employability due to lack of opportunities provided by the job/organisation (P5) and graduates' prior lack of CSM and employability (P6); that perceived employability is likely to result in perceived ease of movement (P7) and willingness to move (P8) depending on the opportunities in the GLM; and that quality of transitions out of underemployment will depend on the availability of opportunities in the GLM (P9). Moreover, in exploring the effects of early underemployment on later career mobility and outcomes, it tests that proposition that following early underemployment graduate job transitions will realise within the intermediate segment of the GLM (P10); and experience of early underemployment will negatively effect well-being and career satisfaction (P11) (See Figure 9.1).

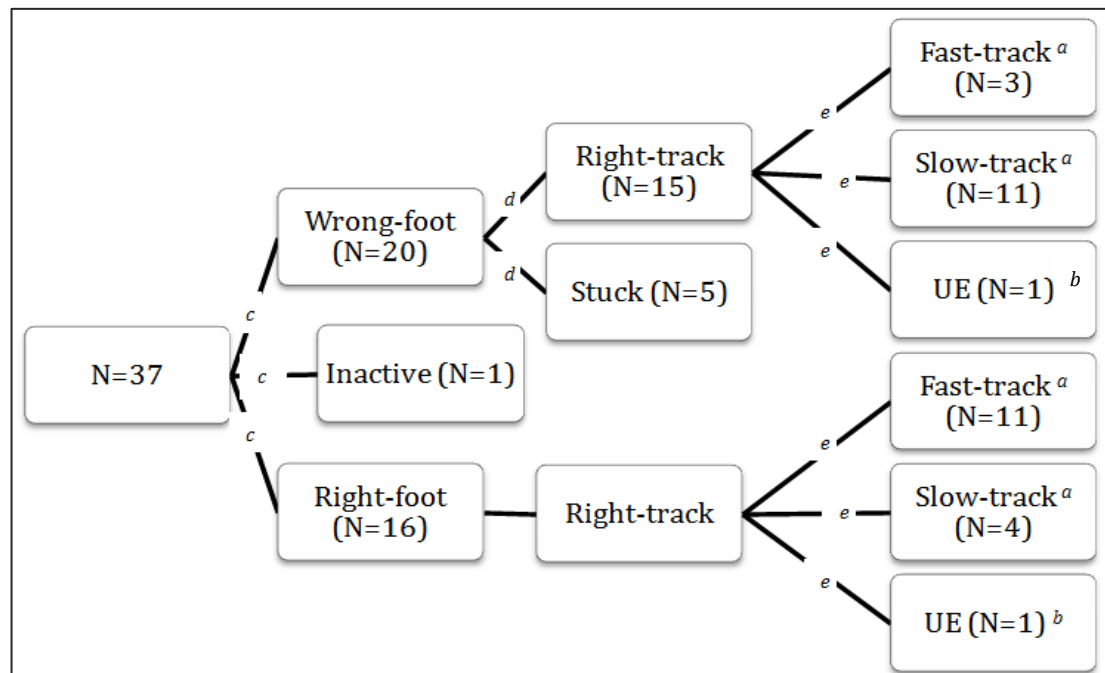
Figure 9.1 Propositions tested in exploring graduate career mobility



Note. The model builds on the analysis of graduate employability discussed in Chapter Seven (presented in grey)

This chapter reports findings from career history analyses using the semi-structured, in-depth graduate interviews with 37 university graduates in the UK who were in the first 10 years of employment after university. There were three steps to this analysis (see Figure 9.2) comprising of an exploration of graduates' (1) entry into early underemployment (path *c*); (2) movement out of underemployment (path *d*); and (3) overall career patterns and outcomes (path *e*). This chapter first compares early career thoughts and actions of graduates who started in underemployment (i.e., 'wrong-foot', N=20) with those who started in 'good' jobs (i.e., 'right-foot', N=16). It then compares career thoughts and actions of graduates who moved out of underemployment (i.e., 'wrong-foot'-'right-track', N=15) to those who were 'stuck' in non-graduate work at the time of interview (N=5). Finally, the chapter compares overall career patterns and outcomes for 'stuck' and 'wrong-foot'-'right-track' graduates with those who started on the right foot and progressed (i.e., 'right-foot'-'right-track').

Figure 9.2 Analytical strategy for exploring graduate career mobility



Note. Data source: Graduate interviews; ^a represents different patterns in graduate career mobility and will be discussed later in the chapter; ^b UE: unemployed; ^c analytical strategy for exploring graduates' entry into underemployment; ^d analytical strategy for exploring graduates' movement out of underemployment; and ^e analytical strategy for exploring graduate career mobility and outcomes following early underemployment.

Entry into underemployment

This section explores graduates' underemployment in the first job upon graduation, comparing early career histories of 'wrong-foot' (N=20) and 'right-foot' (N=16) participants¹¹ (see Figure 9.2, path *c*). More specifically, it explores the role of (i) perceived employability and opportunities in the GLM on graduates' career indecision (P1) and discouragement from the labour market (P2); and of (ii) career indecision (P3) and discouragement from the labour market (P4) on graduates' entry into underemployment in the first job (see Figure 9.1 for a summary of the propositions). It is assumed here that

¹¹ One participant (Participant 37) was economically inactive since leaving university in 2003.

graduates' degree subject is an indicator of the opportunities in the GLM, as graduates from non-professional degree courses (i.e., arts, social science and humanities; ASH) were found to be more likely to be underemployed in the first job and there are less clear career routes associated with these courses, in comparison to professional degree courses (i.e., non-ASH).

In exploring the relationship between perceived employability and career indecision, interview data showed that out of 37 participants 16 (eight ASH and eight non-ASH) experienced some degree of career indecision upon graduation, 11 of which had engaged in little or no CSM upon graduation and had poor employability perceptions (six ASH and five non-ASH) (See Table 9.1). For ASH participants who experienced career indecision (N=8, six with poor perception of employability) this was due to a lack of clear career routes to follow, while for those from non-ASH courses (N=8, five with poor perception of employability) it was associated with spotting opportunities suitable to their knowledge, skills and abilities in the labour market. Hence, career indecision for the former was associated with not knowing where to start:

Doctors, etc have a set career path in the beginning. I guess you can say archaeologists do have a set path, if I choose that as a career. I could have just stayed and got something for a PhD or research. But other than that I didn't know what to do with it.
(Participant 11)

For non-ASH participants, career indecision was related to not being able to decide on which opportunities within, the diversity of the labour market, they

find aligned with their goals. Participant 26 clarifies this and the difference in career clarity she experienced as a result of retraining in a more specific area (i.e., web development) from her original degree in English literature:

Most people went to get an extra qualification. There were no clear career routes. I had no idea of what to do, it's very very broad. The only people I know who'd decided to go and be writers and things like that are the ones who took the academic route. I was amazed at the difference between my first degree which was too general to help you in knowing what you wanted to do, whereas with the second degree, you came out of it and you knew the skills you had and you knew what you were looking for in a job. (Participant 26)

In comparison, for participants from non-ASH courses the experience of career indecision was less pronounced as they could perceive routes that they could follow, yet were having difficulty in decision making due to a lack of knowledge of jobs and how they would fit in:

I was playing with the idea of becoming an analyst of some sort. I don't think I had an objective role description that I would want to do. It was more about getting a job and seeing where that could possibly take you. The main focus was the financial companies because I had a little financial background. (Participant 25)

These differences in early career thoughts of ASH and non-ASH participants provide support for the proposition that unfavourable employability perceptions will be associated with career indecision if the demand for skills in

the labour market is low (P1). However, interview data also showed that contrary to that proposed in Chapter Five (i.e., unfavourable employability perceptions will be more likely to result in career indecision ...), it was the experienced career indecision that effected participants' perceptions of employability. Almost all (five out of six) ASH graduates who had poor employability perceptions due to career indecision stated that at the time of graduation, even though they somehow expected to find jobs related to their academic fields, they had the perception that there were no jobs out there for them (e.g., *"I found that particularly difficult, there weren't a lot of jobs that were relevant to psychology"* Participant 13). In comparison, non-ASH participants who had poor employability perceptions due to career indecision (N=5), while also expecting to find work in their field of specialisation, stated that they did not start thinking careers until after graduation and, therefore, were not aware of 'what' they were employable for.

This difference in the nature of career indecision and hence, employability perceptions, between ASH and non-ASH participants was, in part, attributable to the role of work experience above their part-time student jobs. As noted in Chapter Seven, the former was less likely to have engaged in work placements, which indirectly contributes to perceived employability via CSM. Out of the 14 participants who took internships and/or work placements in this group, only four were ASH graduates. Ten of the 14 participants who had work experience during university stated that they had good perception of employability (only two of these were ASH graduates), and only five had experienced career

indecision (three of those were ASH graduates). Hence, for most participants (nine out of 14) work experience in the form of work placements or internships had helped engaging in CSM and enhancing perceived employability by clarifying their goals and also observing the nature of opportunities in the GLM.

I was actually lucky that I had an internship in my third year and was offered a full-time position within Procter and Gamble. And I realised that was a company where I can achieve what I wanted.
(Participant 20)

For my placement I was getting paid very little but it was good in terms of getting the experience and exposure to advertising. I was in a group, supporting people and I felt I was appreciated for the ideas I had and for my work and everything, so it was good.
(Participant 19)

One participant who experienced career indecision and had poor employability perceptions upon graduation had decided to pursue postgraduate education. This was not, however, a conscious effort to increase her employability but rather a haphazard decision to end her career indecision and give her a direction, which inadvertently boosted her perceived employability:

I didn't really want to do anything. I was a bit lost. ... But then I decided that I wanted to do a postgrad. Again, it was a random choice of course. But the good thing is that the majority of people go and work for Careers Scotland because there is really only one organisation. Well, people go and work in a college or university, or the local agencies that help unemployed people but the majority of the people work for Careers Scotland and the

course was really focused on Careers Scotland. So I pretty much knew I was going to end up on it. (Participant 7)

When asked if they sought any career advice, nine of the 16 participants who experienced career indecision reveal that they have actually visited the careers service in their universities. This was, however, mostly for CV preparation purposes rather than understanding their options in the labour market. Moreover, there was some resentment amongst four participants with regards to the advice they received in their applications as this generally centred around application to large graduate employers (e.g., *"I think they were very much focused on graduate jobs, because as a graduate you must get a graduate job. And I think I relied too much on that at first."* Participant 6). Other than careers services, all but two, who experienced career indecision (N=16) consulted their families and/or academic advisors at university who also directed them towards large graduate employers, as this is where the career opportunities were perceived to be. This advice had contributed to a sense of entitlement for 'graduate' jobs.

I always remember my family saying to me it doesn't matter what you choose at university unless you're going to choose something that you're going to make a career out of, like medicine, like kind of professional degrees. There was this lady at this family event. She was a career advisor or something like that. We had a really in-depth conversation. What I took from that was, 90 per cent of the employers were looking for four years of uni, analytical skills, leadership and all that kind of stuff.

Essentially she said to me, it doesn't matter what you do at uni, just finish it as best as you can. (Participant 29)

My lecturer said that to get a degree from a university, like Glasgow Uni, even though I wasn't interested in geography it was very good. He said to get a grade that I got was very good, too. He said I could go and get a job that was a graduate job that wasn't related to geography. You know, I could just use the degree to show that I was intelligent and educated. (Participant 10)

In exploring how career indecision results in underemployment in the first job (P3) the interview data showed that four participants (two ASH and two non-ASH graduates) out of the 16 had taken up any available job (e.g., *"I had no idea. So when I graduated I started working full-time in a bar where I worked part-time during university"* Participant 1), two participants secured what they perceive to be 'good' jobs (Participant 7 and Participant 16). Both participants did so by overcoming their initial career indecision. Participant 16 had engaged in extensive job search and networking, while, as noted above, Participant 7 completed a post-graduate degree in an area of work that has clear career routes. For two (Participant 30 and Participant 35) of the four participants who took up any available job, this was partly due to immediate financial need (*"I had debt to pay. I thought I'm going to get my head down for the next few years, get some debt paid off and then perhaps think about it."* Participant 30). For the remaining ten participants who had experienced career indecision, application to graduate trainee programmes in large graduate employers was a first response before engaging in any CSM.

Ten participants, who applied for graduate traineeships due to career indecision, stated that at the time this seemed to be the *“next logical step after university”* (Participant 16), almost as if a continuation of their education where they expect to *“go in and be trained rather than go straight into a job”* (Participant 10). They appear to rely too much on these applications for a start to their careers with almost a sense of entitlement to these jobs and as Participant 6 states *“that can be a big disappointment for people”* as they seldom appreciate the amount of competition for these jobs. Their sense of entitlement to these ‘traditional’ graduate jobs implicitly suggests favourable perceptions of employability. Yet, only three out of the ten participants who applied for graduate traineeships due to career indecision stated that they perceived themselves to be highly employable in the GLM. Nevertheless, the detailed accounts of CSM mentioned by interview participants who had favourable employability perceptions in Chapter Seven were largely missing in the accounts of these graduates who applied for graduate traineeships out of career indecision, regardless of whether they perceived themselves employable or not. For nine out of the ten graduates who took it for granted that they would secure a place in large graduate employers despite their career indecision, their futile applications resulted in discouragement from the graduate labour market, which was instrumental in participants’ start to their career on the ‘wrong-foot’. At the most extreme, for one participant (Participant 37) this resulted in an overall discouragement from the labour market. They seem to succumb to easy entry low skilled jobs as, due to lack of CSM they could not develop an understanding as to how limited the availability of these graduates jobs are and,

if not these traditional graduate jobs 'what' they were employable for in the labour market.

I didn't appreciate how difficult those were to get, which is why I ended up working in a call centre. It's my own fault (Participant 33).

I was working for Marks and Spencer's and I was kind of happy. I kind of decided that I want to stay in this full-time for now. I didn't want to go to graduate job market for a while. I couldn't see what else I could do and had no fixed plan. (Participant 15)

Exploring the relationship between perceived employability and discouragement from the GLM (P2), overall 14 participants (nine of which were ASH graduates) had experienced disillusionment with their options and, hence, a discouragement from seeking high skilled work (see Table 9.1). Five out of these 14 graduates who experienced discouragement had favourable employability perceptions upon graduation (three of which were ASH graduates). For most (eight out of 14), discouragement from the GLM was highly related to their initial career indecision. All participants, but two (Participant 6 and Participant 37) who applied for graduate traineeships due to career indecision and were later discouraged (N=10) from the labour market stated that they ended up taking the first easy entry job. Hence, career indecision and discouragement from the GLM together accounted for eight of the 20 participants' start to their careers on the 'wrong-foot'.

Some attributed their predicament on the 'wrong-foot' to lower degree classifications (2:2 or ordinary degree) (N=5) and/or coming from more disadvantaged backgrounds (N=2). The initial career indecision and discouragement, particular due to degree class and social background, had lowered perception of employability further (e.g., *"I thought I'm going to get whatever job I can. Finishing with a 2:2, I know I couldn't aim particularly high"* Participant 13). As noted in Chapter Seven, not having a 2:1 or higher degree class and/or not having access to the right networks due to social background had an inhibitory role in graduates' job search and career exploration, as they perceived a sense of futility in seeking high skilled work:

I didn't get any responses. I thought it was possibly because I had a designated degree and not an honours degree because most of the applications that I was coming against were saying 2:1 or better, you know - I was like damn... I was applying anyway but wouldn't get anything back. So I never had any interviews. So I kind of worked restaurant jobs. (Participant 10)

For two participants (Participant 10 and Participant 26) of the eight who took up any available job due to career indecision and discouragement, it was also the pressures of immediate financial need that pushed them into underemployment. These graduates simply could not afford to take more time to find a job that matched their preferences. In comparison, for instance, Participant 7 had a three-month gap between her graduation and starting her first job, during which she states *"I didn't work, mom and dad were very good to me"*.

I was like I have to get money. I didn't have a career plan. I didn't have a career focus. I wasn't thinking strategically about a career. I was just thinking that I should find a job that would pay the bills and get me started and I can't take the time to apply for real jobs anymore. (Participant 26)

Overall, there was a general inertia with regards to career decisions and actions amongst those who started on the wrong foot (N=20). Part of this inertia was due to their disappointment in graduate traineeship applications which resulted in discouragement as they realised how difficult/competitive it is to secure these positions. Only one participant (Participant 16), whose applications to graduate schemes were turned down repeatedly, rather than being discouraged, engaged in extensive CSM to improve his employability in the GLM. The detailed career exploration, job search and networking observed in Participant 16's account below is commonly missing in the career thoughts and actions of participants who experienced career indecision and discouragement from the GLM in early careers:

I didn't have any career plans. I wasn't sure exactly where I wanted to go and what I wanted to do after uni so I applied to a few big names but didn't hear anything back. ... Then I went to graduate fairs and I spoke to some of the banks. I've spoken with other students who graduated before we have and they were working in bank-type programmes. I was at the careers fairs. I spent some time in the careers office, spoken to the course advisor who's running the degree, I've spoken to the folk in my part-time job and customers I've got to know. You just got to hear everybody's ideas. I kind of used a lot of resources if you

like. ... In terms of salary, you look at what other programmes offer so you have an idea in mind and you know roughly what you're aiming. (Participant 16)

Only for four participants, discouragement from the GLM was not accompanied by career indecision. For three of these participants, it was the immediate financial need, two of which were related to their personal interests in travelling after university. Participant 21 and Participant 28 had taken a year out to travel and upon their return they were discouraged by the time and effort that needs to be allocated to securing high skilled jobs and, hence, succumbed to easy entry low skilled jobs. For Participant 13, financial need resonated from her desire to complete a postgraduate course in a more specialised area of work. Hence, to save up money she moved in with her parents and worked in two separate, part-time jobs. Participant 32, completed a postgraduate degree immediately after graduation due to her perception that her degree was not enough to secure good jobs in the labour market (*"I realised having a 2:1 from an Arts subject is not something that sets you apart from anybody else"*). Hence, it was an attempt to increase her employability by increasing her credentials, as she perceived a lack of opportunities due to her ASH degree. Nevertheless, not having had any interviews even after completion of her second degree discouraged her further, leading her to start in first available job.

In retrospect, the majority of the participants who started on the 'wrong-foot' (N=12) take the blame for their predicament in low skilled work and state that they got 'lazy' and/or scared of taking control of their careers and that they

later developed an understanding of the GLM and where they stood in it (*"I found my way through getting rejection letters"* Participant 19). Participant 21 provides a clear and detailed examination of how his initial indecision and discouragement have made him start on the wrong foot:

What happened was when I finished my degree, the job that I had part-time as a sales manager. It paid very well so I kept that one and went full-time. It paid about 25 - 26K, so I got lazy and didn't look around much. I didn't actually have any idea how you actually work in the real world. I didn't realise how much competition there was for jobs. So it's a lack of maturity. I didn't realise how everything worked. I didn't have a great awareness of different types of career. I knew certain environments I wanted to work in but I never knew what the jobs were like. Only because of my experience now I know what people are actually doing on the job. But back then, you don't know what they are doing in their jobs. So I fancied working for maybe PwC or one of the consultancy firms, just that environment but not a specific role. But then with my only having a basic degree I couldn't have gone into that route. (Participant 21)

As observed in Table 9.1, only a minority of participants (N=4, all non-ASH participants) who engaged in extensive CSM, developed high employability perceptions and did not experience any career indecision or discouragement were offered graduate traineeships or similar positions immediately at the end of their first degree. These participants were not only clear in relation to their career goals but were also ready for setbacks in their plans (e.g., *"If I didn't get a job in the field that I wanted I was actually going to go back to uni and finish my*

law degree, which would only take a year to do" Participant 18) and therefore there were no accounts of discouragement in their interviews.

Ten further participants, who did not experience career indecision or discouragement, started in what they call 'good' jobs, which were not necessarily highly skilled ("*You know you are the junior back career.*" Participant 2) yet they saw this as a good start to their careers. Half of these participants had vague ideas as to what they wanted to do while the other half took up these jobs just to get their career started. In this sense, these participants' choice of these jobs were with the expectation that 'somehow' these jobs would act as stepping stones to better opportunities, which they could not yet perceive at the start of their careers. For instance, Participant 19 after completing two internships in areas related to her degree in communication and media studies (in journalism and advertising) realises that her degree is not sufficient to secure jobs in the GLM and completes an postgraduate degree in marketing to specialise and increase her chances of securing employment. Following this, she finds her first job as a copywriter in an advertising agency, which according to her description is not necessarily highly skilled and does not require a university degree to do yet gives her the experience necessary to move on to better jobs:

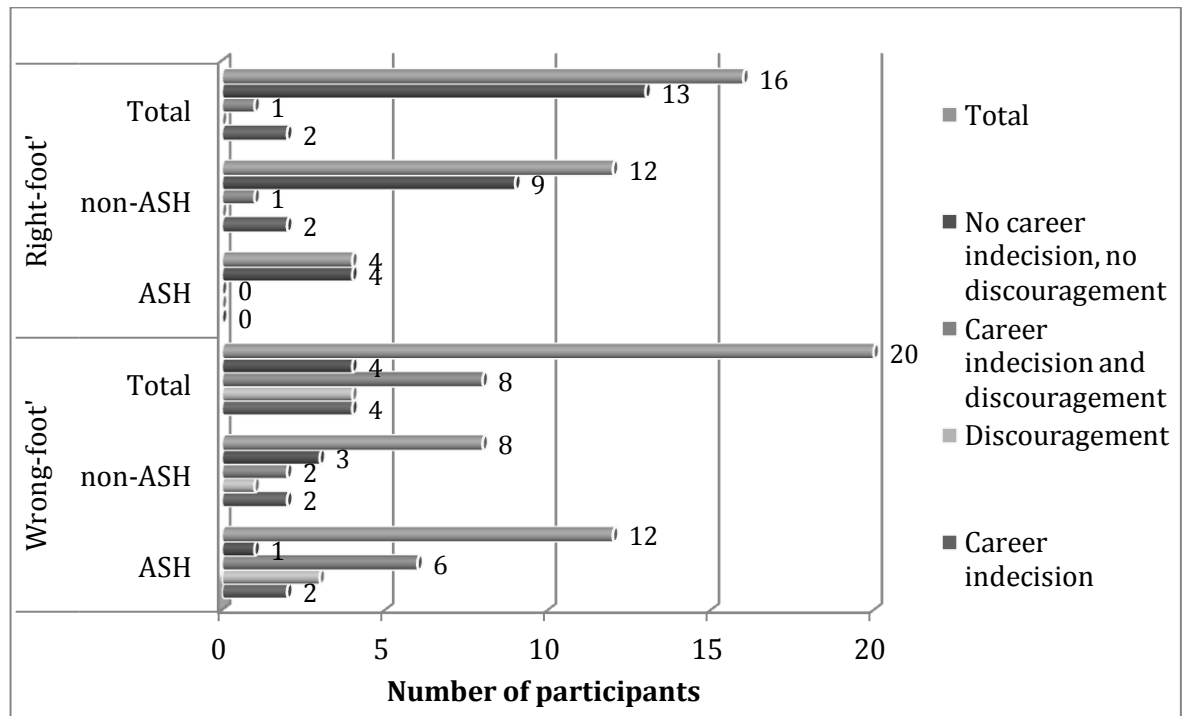
It was good for me because otherwise I'd be considered as a graduate with no experience at all ... It was fairly interesting but it wasn't challenging. It wasn't something I wanted to do for a long time and I knew I wasn't going to be there for a long time.
(Participant 19)

Overall, there were four participants who engaged in CSM and did not experience any career indecision or discouragement from the GLM yet could not secure 'good' jobs. One common characteristic amongst these participants' first jobs is that all are related to the areas they have studied at university (see Table 9.1). For instance, Participant 31 and Participant 25 had both taken up their part-time student work which is related to their area of study on a full-time basis, even though these are low skilled basic jobs they had the expectation that this would act as a stepping stone for better jobs. Similarly, Participant 8 and Participant 36 start their careers in basic entry level jobs, yet ones that are related to their academic specialisation.

It's quite routine. I'm glad I didn't do it for very long. But I just thought it was a stepping stone to something else, to get into that industry and how it works and then I'd be applying to other vacancies. (Participant 8)

This analysis so far suggests that a considerable proportion of the participants (the majority of which were ASH graduates) had experienced career indecision and/or discouragement from the graduate labour market, which negatively affected perceived employability upon graduation, and were instrumental in graduates' start to careers on the 'wrong-foot' (see Figure 9.3 for a summary). This chapter next explores transition out of underemployment for 'wrong-foot' participants.

Figure 9.3 Summary of participants' early career indecision and discouragement from the GLM (N=36)



Note. Data source: Graduate interviews. ASH = Graduates from arts, social sciences and humanities; non-ASH = Graduates from business/engineering.

Table 9.1 Description of 'right-foot' and 'wrong-foot' graduates (N=37)

P	Age	Sex	Degree subject ^a	Degree class ^b	Work experience	Employability	Career indecision	Discouragement from GLM	RF/WF	Relevance of work to degree ^c
P31	27	F	ASH	2:1	No	High	No	No	WF	Relevant, admin
P25	25	M	NON-ASH	2:2	No	High	No	No	WF	Relevant, asst prof
P36	27	F	NON-ASH	1st	Yes	High	No	No	WF	Relevant, admin
P8	26	F	NON-ASH	Ord	Yes	High	No	No	WF	Relevant, admin
P13	24	F	ASH	2:2	Yes	Low	No	Yes	WF	Non-relevant, non-grad
P28	29	M	ASH	2:1	Yes	High	No	Yes	WF	Non-relevant, non-grad
P32	25	F	ASH	2:1	No	Low	No	Yes	WF	Relevant, asst prof
P21	25	M	NON-ASH	Ord	No	Low	No	Yes	WF	Non-relevant, P/M
P35	23	F	ASH	1st	No	Low	Yes	No	WF	Non-relevant, non-grad
P1	35	M	ASH	1st	No	Low	Yes	No	WF	Non-relevant, non-grad
P30	33	F	NON-ASH	Ord	Yes	Low	Yes	No	WF	Non-relevant, non-grad
P14	32	M	NON-ASH	1st	Yes	Low	Yes	No	WF	Relevant, P/M
P10	25	M	ASH	Ord	No	Low	Yes	Yes	WF	Non-relevant, non-grad
P11	24	F	ASH	2:2	No	Low	Yes	Yes	WF	Non-relevant, non-grad
P22	25	M	ASH	Ord	No	High	Yes	Yes	WF	Non-relevant, non-grad
P26	31	F	ASH	2:1	No	Low	Yes	Yes	WF	Non-relevant, non-grad
P29	28	M	ASH	Ord	No	Low	Yes	Yes	WF	Non-relevant, admin
P4	29	F	ASH	1st	Yes	High	Yes	Yes	WF	Relevant, non-grad
P15	23	M	NON-ASH	2:1	No	Low	Yes	Yes	WF	Non-relevant, admin
P33	28	M	NON-ASH	2:1	No	High	Yes	Yes	WF	Non-relevant, non-grad

Note. Data source: Graduate interviews; ^a ASH = Arts, social sciences and humanities graduates, BE=Business or engineering graduates; ^b Ord: Ordinary degree without Honours; ^c admin = administrative/secretarial occupations, asst prof = associate professional occupations, P/M = professional/managerial occupations, non-grad = non-graduate occupations; RF = 'Right-foot', WF = 'Wrong-foot'

Table 9.1 continued...

P	Age	Sex	Degree subject ^a	Degree class ^b	Work experience	Employability	Career indecision	Discouragement from GLM	RF/WF	Relevance of work to degree ^c
17	59	F	ASH	Ord	No	High	No	No	RF	N/A ^d
5	33	F	ASH	Ord	No	High	No	No	RF	Relevant, asst prof
19	26	F	ASH	2:1	Yes	High	No	No	RF	Relevant, asst prof
34	27	M	ASH	2:1	No	High	No	No	RF	Self-employed
18	26	M	NON-ASH	2:1	No	High	No	No	RF	Relevant, P/M
20	25	M	NON-ASH	2:1	Yes	High	No	No	RF	Relevant, grad level
24	23	F	NON-ASH	1st	Yes	High	No	No	RF	Relevant, P/M
27	28	F	NON-ASH	2:1	Yes	High	No	No	RF	Relevant, P/M
23	32	M	NON-ASH	2:1	Yes	High	No	No	RF	Relevant field, grad level
3	27	M	NON-ASH	2:1	No	High	No	No	RF	Relevant field, grad level
9	31	M	NON-ASH	1st	No	High	No	No	RF	Relevant field, grad level
2	32	M	NON-ASH	2:2	No	High	No	No	RF	Relevant field, low skilled
12	29	M	NON-ASH	2:1	Yes	High	No	No	RF	Self-employed
16	24	M	NON-ASH	2:1	Yes	High	Yes	No	RF	Relevant, P/M
7	28	F	NON-ASH	2:1	No	Low	Yes	No	RF	Relevant, asst prof
6	28	M	NON-ASH	2:1	Yes	Low	Yes	Yes	RF	Relevant, asst prof
37	30	M	NON-ASH	2:2	No	High	Yes	Yes	Inactive	N/A ^e

Note. Data source: Graduate interviews; ^a ASH = Arts, social sciences and humanities graduates, BE=Business or engineering graduates; ^b Ord: Ordinary degree without Honours; ^c admin = administrative/secretarial occupations, asst prof = associate professional occupations, P/M = professional/managerial occupations, non-grad = non-graduate occupations, grad level = graduate trainee schemes; ^d job relevance is not applicable as the participant already had a 'job for life' and completed a part-time degree; ^e job relevance is not applicable as the participant never had a job; RF = 'Right-foot', WF = 'Wrong-foot'

Transition out of underemployment

This section explores graduates' transition out of underemployment. To this end, it compares career histories for interview participants who started on the 'wrong-foot' and moved out ('wrong-foot'-'right-track') with those who were still 'stuck' in underemployment at the time of interview (see Figure 9.2, path *d*). More specifically, it tests the propositions that underemployment in the first job negatively affects employability due to lack of opportunities provided by the job/organisation (P5) and graduates' prior lack of CSM skills and unfavourable employability perceptions (P6); that employability perceptions will be related to willingness to move (P7) and perceived ease of movement (P8) depending on the availability of opportunities in the GLM; and that the quality of transitions will depend on the availability of opportunities in the GLM (P9) (see Figure 9.1 for a summary of propositions). At the time of interview, out of the 20 participants who started on the 'wrong-foot', five were 'stuck' in low skilled work and 15 had moved out of initial underemployment.

In exploring the role of opportunities provided by the job and/or the organisation in enhancing graduates' CSM and employability (P5), it can be observed in Appendix V that all, but one (Participant 32), of the 'stuck' participants had started their careers in low skilled non-graduate work (e.g., waitress), whereas for the 'wrong-foot'-'right-track' graduates we observe that seven had started in non-graduate occupations, five in administrative/secretarial occupations and the remaining three in more managerial/professional and associated professional occupations (e.g., sales

manager). Moreover, for six of the 'wrong-foot'-'right-track' participants these jobs were vaguely relevant either to their academic field of specialisation or their interests and participants had taken up these jobs in order "*... to get into that industry and how it works and then I'd be applying to other vacancies.*" (Participant 8).

Exploring how the opportunities provided by the job/organisation influence employability for graduates who are underemployed in the first job, the interview data shows that for 'stuck' participants, the mundane nature of their jobs was a major hindrance to their motivation for career exploration and job search. Even though the jobs they held were not mentally challenging, participants revealed that at the end of the day they felt both mentally and physically drained and "*the last thing [they] want to do is to go home and search the internet for jobs*" (Participant 35). By contrast for the 'wrong-foot'-'right-track' participants, particularly for six who had managed to secure jobs that are relevant to their specialisation/interest with the expectation that these would act as stepping-stones to better jobs, albeit disappointing, these jobs provided an understanding of how the industry works, "*an introduction to the world of work*" (Participant 29) and, hence, an exposure to opportunities in the labour market for them, which they initially lacked. Within the 'wrong-foot'-'right-track' group, those who initially took up any available job yet still managed to move out (N=9) eventually took longer to clarify interests, preferences and understand how these could fit in the labour market. In this sense, in retrospect, even though overall they believe these were poor quality jobs due to lack of

development and poor pay, they also admit that this experience was good for them and served to clarify their preferences and helped them move out. Hence, while for the 'stuck' participants the nature of the job negatively effects opportunities to enhance employability, for the 'wrong-foot'-'right-track' participants these jobs, particularly those relevant to participants' area of specialisation, inadvertently served to enhance participants' career exploration and perceived employability, and, thereby, overcoming initial career indecision.

Eight of the 20 participants who started on the 'wrong-foot' reported favourable perceptions of employability upon graduation. Exploring how initial employability perceptions affect employability development for those who started on the 'wrong-foot', the interview data showed that amongst these eight 'wrong-foot' participants who initially had high perception of employability, all but one (Participant 22) had moved out of early underemployment. For Participant 22, who could not move out early underemployment, we observe his initial high employability actually worsening with experience of underemployment and not being able to find employment despite completing a postgraduate degree to increase his chances in the labour market. This is largely attributed to the lack of opportunities in the GLM:

There is no graduate jobs. That's unfortunately not just my experience. Everyone I talk to, there is no opportunities. I try to keep up to date with current affairs, the government are trying to put 50 per cent of demographic into university degrees, there is no jobs at the end of it. So why spend four years... I've always found that from my experience, there was no job preparation at all. There is no like here is an opportunity to actually to put your

theory into practice, here is how you go about using your skills. The problem is most of the jobs require experience but you can't get the experience it's the old catch 22. (Participant 22)

For other 'wrong-foot' participants who had initial high perceptions of employability (N=7), experience of early underemployment led them to put in more effort in their exploration, networking and job search activities ("*I think I was applying constantly. I had the time as well. I was driven to get out rather than being in a shit job*" Participant 33). Hence, this experience in the first job did not dampen but positively contributed to employability perceptions due to participants' increased CSM.

Amongst the 'wrong-foot' participants, 12 had poor employability perceptions upon graduation (four of which were 'stuck' in underemployment at the time of interview). For this group, initial underemployment, particularly when prolonged (i.e., for 'stuck' graduates), effected perceived employability and self-esteem negatively. This is because these participants (N=4) blame their own inability to secure good jobs, or as observed above in the case of Participant 22, the nature of opportunities in the GLM for their predicament. This resulted in a sense of helplessness and a perceived 'un-employability':

I think I had a few years of training, not that I'm actually intelligent-this is how I feel personally. I think the first job at the restaurant had just really worn me down. It's been pathetic. (Participant 11)

For the remaining eight participants on the 'wrong-foot' who initially had low perceived employability and moved out (i.e., 'wrong-foot'-'right-track'), experience of initial underemployment had ameliorated perception of employability for five, but not for three participants who can be identified as 'drifters' in this group. For three participants whose initial perception of employability ameliorated with experience of underemployment this was because they came to a realisation that they '*can do better than this*' (Participant 29) and that they knew they would "*eventually almost fall onto something*" (Participant 15).

Two participants who eventually increased their perceived employability (Participant 26 and Participant 21) on the 'wrong-track', experienced prolonged underemployment and gave up hope on job search due to lowered employability perceptions based on their degree subject/qualification and lack of challenging work experience that led to their professional and personal development. They, nevertheless, saw the light in retraining and/or taking postgraduate qualifications. Participant 26 had spent the first five years of her career as a graduate in call centres and/or working as an administrator. Her immediate financial need was a major hindrance in career exploration and job search and similar to 'stuck' graduates she claimed the jobs she held drained her energy and that she lost the motivation to take initiative. She then comes to a realisation that she has to take control of her career. Her approach, however, is somewhat fatalistic and not due to a conscious attempt for CSM.

I'm a Christian. And I was on the train one day going to work, very depressed because I hated my job. I was praying to God saying like you know Lord I need you to find me something. I can't handle it any more. And suddenly this idea drops in my mind. It literally dropped in. At the time I didn't know anything about web development. I think basically there would be some background to it in terms of I've always been interested in arts and I've always liked the aesthetic side. I was thinking how could that be translated into a job, how could I actually pay the bills. That was as much thought as I put into it. I didn't have any experience of web development or whatever. When it dropped into my head, I thought 'oh yeah that would be something, with visual design and things like that' but it should provide a steady job. (Participant 26)

Participant 21, on the other hand, similarly feels stuck in his non-graduate job. His trigger for taking up postgraduate education was due to social comparisons and realising that other graduates were advancing in their careers. He then decides to take control of his career by completing a postgraduate course to top up his ordinary marketing degree (*That was when I started to realise I can't get anywhere with no education really, or just a BA*). Nevertheless, both participants, upon completion of their second degree had to go back on their last non-graduate jobs on a full-time basis due to immediate financial need. What made the difference, however, was that with the completion of a more specialised degree course they could now see opportunities in the labour market and had higher perception of employability. They could now see how their skills gained through the second degree fit in the GLM via easier career exploration and job

search. Hence, within a few months after graduation they were able to secure better jobs, related to their new specialisation.

Further three participants on the 'wrong-foot' who had initial poor perceptions of employability yet managed to move out were, despite feeling underemployed, were rather indifferent to this experience (e.g., "*I thought I'm going to get my head down for the next few years, get some debt paid off and then perhaps think about it.*" Participant 30) and may be identified as drifters. In this sense, experience of early underemployment did not alter their perception of employability either positively or negatively.

In exploring how perceived employability relates to willingness and perceived ease of movement (P7, P8) the interview data suggested that regardless of perception of employability, there was a common willingness to 'move out' amongst the 'wrong-foot' participants, except for the drifters. This was due to not being able to use and develop their skills and knowledge on the job and to the little salary associated with these jobs. There was, nevertheless, a difference with regards to how soon underemployment was translated into a willingness to move. For 'wrong-foot' participants who had high perception of employability which was further heightened as a result of underemployment in the first job (N=7), this took less time, within a period of three to six months, in comparison to those who had poor initial perceptions of employability (N=12). The great majority of these participants (five out of seven) for whom experience of underemployment triggered a willingness to move sooner, had taken up traditionally non-graduate jobs in areas of work that they were vaguely

interested in with the expectation that this would act as a stepping stone to better jobs. This expectation, that starting at the lower level allowed them to gain awareness and experience in the field, further contributed to their disappointment due to lack of development through the job and opportunities provided by the organisation, and, hence, to their willingness to move sooner. Participant 28, for instance, with the idea of building on his part-time work experience at a recruitment agency during university, takes up an HR assistant position following experience of two short-term temporary contracts in low skilled non-graduate jobs, such as door steward. Yet, the nature of this job provoked feelings of 'being trapped' and instilled a willingness to move out, despite his interest in the area of work:

I hated it. It just wasn't challenging enough and I think that was the main problem. There was no drive. So what's the reason for doing it and what's the reason for getting up and going there, if you're not challenged. You feel kind of trapped. My sickness absence went through the roof because I just couldn't be bothered going in. It wasn't like a real job for me. (Participant 28)

In comparison to those 'wrong-foot' participants who had high employability perceptions and/or secured first jobs in areas relevant to field of specialisation, for those who took up any available job upon graduation due to low employability perceptions based on career indecision and/or discouragement, willingness to move was experienced later in their experience of underemployment. This was because participants who started on the 'wrong-

foot' due to career indecision and/or underemployment took longer to clarify interests, preferences and understand how these could fit in the labour market. Participant 26's career history as an English language graduate is a good example for this 'slow-track' as she drifted from one low skilled job to another for the first five and a half years of her career post-graduation (see Appendix V).

For 13 participants (three 'stuck' and nine 'wrong-foot'-'right-track') who started on the 'wrong-foot', heightened willingness to move led to increased job search activities. Internal applications were commonly a first response to willingness to move. Participant 29 is an excellent example of those who used the availability of internal opportunities well. Even though his initial ordinary degree in social sciences had discouraged him, he admits when accepting his first job as an administrative assistant he still had the idea of later finding a 'graduate trainee' position in mind. This, however, changed when the organisation was bought over by a Spanish bank and he identified an internal promotion prospect:

A few months after joining, Abbey was bought over by Santander. So it was exciting because it was one of the largest banks in the world. So I thought there must be a sea of opportunities. So I just put the graduate programme idea aside. I suppose part of that was about getting the promotion, I kind of thought this could open up new things for me. And the job that I got ten months in was very different than what I was doing before. It was a lot more exciting and fast paced. (Participant 29)

For those who could not secure or perceive opportunities internally, this was either due to the temporary contracts they held (e.g., Participant 28 was only employed for the Christmas period in this first job) or they perceived barriers/lack of opportunities in advancement within the organisation (e.g., Participant 25). In these cases, it was not only increased job searching but also networking with professionals in the field and/or fellow graduates from their degree courses that helped them move out of their predicament.

At the time, a few of the HR policies and procedure were maybe stopping me from progressing in the firm. While I tried to progress and I would have been happy to stay with the firm there was a barrier there that I felt that I couldn't get over. ... When I was ticking all the job role description boxes and when I've been working there for a while, I was still not getting an interview. (Participant 25)

I suppose at the time it did affect my self-esteem but it also gave me more drive to go and get another job. So I was constantly searching on the internet about what do I want to do and where do I want to go. That's when I got the recruitment job after that. I mean, I got that because I was friends with somebody that worked in recruitment. ... He gave me his card and said phone me up and we'll see what we can do. Then he got me this recruitment job. (Participant 28)

As noted above, for two participants (Participant 21 and Participant 26) prolonged underemployment, despite job search and networking, had led them to retrain in more specific areas of work based on a willingness to move out of the cycle of low skilled work within which their careers were realising.

Similarly, two further participants who were 'stuck' at the time of interview (Participant 10 and Participant 22) have sought retraining/postgraduate qualifications as a way out of their predicament. Coincidentally, both participants were advised to switch from a degree in computer science to a designated degree in geography during their studies at the University of Glasgow. This initially caused great indecision and discouragement from the graduate labour market due to the lack of clear career routes associated with geography and the perception that degree classification acts as a barrier in the graduate labour market. Participant 10 then haphazardly retrains as an English teacher first, but following a short and dissatisfying experience of working as an English teacher in Italy, he then decides to retrain in Audio Engineering, something which he had always been interested in. Participant 22, on the other hand, after two years of working as a sales representative at less than minimum wage, decides to pursue postgraduate education with the assumption that this will place him ahead of the queue in the labour market. Eventually, Participant 10 has clarified a preference to stay in the broadcasting industry and work in the area of sound, while Participant 22 broadly decided to work in marketing.

There was, however, a difference in how these two participants took responsibility for and control of their careers. Participant 22 was acting on the assumption that *"two degrees should lead to a good job"* but was further disappointed when they did not. There was little evidence of CSM in his career history but vast amount of blaming his predicament on the structure of Higher

Education, the labour market and the government policies, as he perceived it a 'right' to have a good job.

Conversely, Participant 10, following his second degree, with a heightened need to take control of his career after experiencing several poor quality, uninteresting and non-challenging jobs, has done extensive research into the options in the industry, created his own website to promote his skills, started networking with individuals in the industry on voluntary projects and has been doing extensive job applications. Below we observe an adaptation of his initial expectations to the state of the labour market as a result of CSM. Nevertheless, in achieving his aims he is still trying to use his little experience to his advantage.

I think that the economic crisis has cut the budgets a lot, especially in film and production and smaller productions. It's really hard to get started. It's probably going to set me back like two years, in terms of getting started properly. ... The way I should have got in for sound, if I could, I'd apply to be a sound trainee and say after a year I'd be working on a program assisting sound crew and then move to sound assistance, then to boom operator, then to mixer, then to sound supervisor. That would be a traditional career path. But there are many other options, and once I get the experience I can choose what I want. But now you can't limit yourself otherwise you won't get to meet people. ... The word of mouth determines your next work for the freelance work. (Participant 10)

This suggests that for most 'wrong-foot' graduates willingness to move was instrumental in actual movement. Yet, for a minority (i.e., the 'stuck') it was not sufficient either due to lack of CSM or despite CSM, depending on the industry.

While regardless of perceived employability all participants but the drifters developed a willingness to move, a difference was observed between 'stuck' and 'wrong-foot'-'right-track' participants' perceived ease of movement. In comparison to the accounts of 'stuck' graduates where experience of poor quality jobs had affected their self-esteem in a negative way and further slowed down their progress, for those who moved out of underemployment this was another push factor: *I felt psychologically as if I needed to move on* (Participant 15). This was also due to their social comparisons with the progress of others from their degree course (*"... because a lot of my friends from uni did go into graduate jobs"* Participant 29).

It's really frustrating. Especially, you know other people that happen to do jobs you think challenge them. I've felt like none of the jobs that I had really challenged me. You reach a stage where you get to know the job and from there, you don't get to develop anymore. (Participant 21)

'Stuck' participants' perceived difficulty in moving is also evident in the attributions they make with regards to their predicament. As noted above, they blame their own inability to secure good jobs (N=3) and/or perceive that there are no jobs in the labour market (N=3). These attributions result in a sense of futility in engaging in CSM and a perceived difficulty in moving out of their predicament. For instance, amongst the 'stuck' graduates Participant 11 was

stuck in a cycle of underemployment in bar/restaurant work followed by travelling for the first two years of her career after graduation. This cycle, however, was broken after she had applied for a graduate position in the Royal Air Force (RAF) and did not qualify. The overall experience of this cycle together with this final rejection from RAF has further lowered her perceived employability and resulted in perceived difficulty of movement, despite having a degree from University of Cambridge.

I was really upset and depressed to start with. But then something just switched in my mind. I thought you just got to draw a line and step over it and think of something else. I guess part of me just switched off. ... I think after the RAF, at the time that was the worst possible thing, I failed miserably again. Then, something in my mind just switched "you know there is more to life, career isn't the only way out". ... At that point I didn't think I was capable of applying for anything harder, I just felt like I wasn't capable of anything so I worked for something really basic but better than waitressing. (Participant 11)

In the case of Participant 32 and Participant 35 (both 'stuck') despite a willingness to move on to a challenging job where they can take responsibilities, the good reputation of the organisations in the industry was a hindrance to their job search as they felt that they should wait to secure a better job in this organisation rather than look elsewhere. This was perceived as a sacrifice they could regret later:

It's like when you're waiting for a bus for half an hour, you know that as soon as you leave that bus stop the bus is going to come.

As soon as you get a taxi the bus is going to come. You know that and you're going to be sorry. (Participant 32)

Exploring the quality of transitions, for most 'wrong-foot' graduates who moved out of early underemployment (N=10) this meant finding a better job than they had before, yet one that is still not particularly highly skilled. As observed in Appendix V, for eight of the 'wrong-foot'-'right-track' participants, movement out of initial underemployment resulted in transition into administrative and assistant professional occupations. In this sense, they had to adapt and compromise their expectations from graduate jobs to a somewhat lower level. For instance, Participant 13 was aspiring to a career as a clinical psychologist and was saving money to complete a postgraduate course to specialise at the time of interview. She took up social support work on a part-time basis. Yet, in the meantime, to keep herself on track with her aspirations, she decided to get a second job, related to her area of interest. Lack of availability of jobs in the labour market meant for her that she would take any research related job because *"it feels better than selling clothes"* (Participant 13). Similarly Participant 29, after six years of work experience and having moved out of initial underemployment within 10 months, still feels underemployed in his job as a technical business consultant:

... in some respects all the time. I still feel frustrated but a lot less underemployed or bored. So yeah, it probably isn't just wages but just comparing with other people, or just thinking about education. (Participant 29)

The three 'drifters' who started on the 'wrong-foot', however, despite feeling underemployed in their first jobs had not started even thinking about their movement and have been approached by others which triggered their movement out of non-graduate work. In the case of Participant 30, it was an internal promotion she was offered which actually put her out of her comfort zone because she was not ready to make a career decision (*"I didn't want to sign the contract but they were saying it's a good organisation, it's a blue-chip organisation, good experience and you can't leave."*). Similarly for Participant 1 and Participant 14, it was their advisors from university who approached them for a research position. For drifters these unexpected events opened up a new direction for the rest of their careers, where they stumbled upon an area of work they enjoyed. Coincidentally, all three participants managed to secure professional and/or managerial positions as a result of this unexpected offer. Apart from the three drifters, only two further 'wrong-foot' participants secured professional/managerial jobs following early underemployment.

I had no idea. When I graduated I was working full-time in a bar and the guy who was my undergraduate dissertation supervisor in the department phoned me up and said, we're about to start a research project and I think you should apply. I applied and I got it. I had no idea what I wanted to do. (Participant 1)

The career history analysis in this section exploring graduates transition out of underemployment suggests that lack of opportunities provided by the jobs and the participants prior perception of employability both influence the extent to which they later engage in CSM to enhance employability. While willingness to

move was found to be a common experience for all 'wrong-foot' participants, it was the perceived ease of movement based on perceived employability that differentiated 'stuck' and 'wrong-foot'-'right-track' participants. Nevertheless, most who moved out of initial underemployment this meant transition into the intermediate segment of the GLM. Hence, based on the evidence from Chapter Eight, the quality of these transitions can be questionable. This chapter next explores the spill-over effects of early underemployment on career mobility and outcomes.

Spill-over effects of early underemployment on career mobility and outcomes

This section compares career progression, well-being and career satisfaction for 'stuck', 'wrong-foot'-'right-track' and 'right-foot'-'right track' participants (see Figure 9.1, path *e*), with the aim of exploring the spill-over effects of early underemployment on later career outcomes. More specifically, it tests the proposition that for those who move out initial underemployment, further job transitions will realise within the intermediate segment of the GLM (P10); and that early underemployment will be negatively associated with well-being and career satisfaction in later career (P11) (see Figure 9.1 for a summary of propositions).

Job transitions following early underemployment

From the 37 participants, 20 had started on the 'wrong-foot'. Out of this 20, 15 had moved out of initial underemployment; all, but one (Participant 4 was unemployed), was on the 'right-track' at the time of interview. Similarly,

amongst the participants who started on the 'right-foot' (N=16) one was unemployed (Participant 3), while the rest described themselves as being on the 'right-track'. As observed in Appendix V, participants' career progression on the 'right-track' was further differentiated into 'fast-track' and 'slow-track'. The former represents career development for participants in large graduate employers or the government where they are offered clear career routes. The latter corresponds to slower career development that involves many job and employer changes for the individuals, thus, as described by Participant 13 represents '*right-track*' but '*slow-track*' to achieve their career goals. Overall, amongst the graduates on the 'right-track', including those who started on the 'wrong-foot', 14 were on the 'fast-track' (three of which started on the 'wrong-foot'), 15 were on 'slow-track', and two were unemployed. Amongst the 'fast-track' participants two had secured a 'job for life'.

Looking at the differences between 'right-foot' and 'wrong-foot' participants who were on the 'slow-track' at the time of interview (see Appendix V), amongst the four 'right-foot'-'slow-track' participants three had started their careers in associate professional occupations and one in administrative/secretarial occupation. By comparison, seven of the 'wrong-foot'-'slow-track' participants started in non-graduate occupations, followed by six in administrative/secretarial occupations and two in managerial/professional occupations (which they believe is haphazardly labelled so and perceive that these were poor jobs). Participants on the 'right-foot'-'slow-track' intentionally started on these associate

professional/administrative jobs to gain experience of the field, as opposed to taking up any available job or vaguely matching degree specialisation to jobs, as commonly observed with the 'wrong-foot' participants. In this sense, they had demonstrated relatively better CSM skills from the start which involved not only clarifying their interests, preferences and strengths but also developing an understanding of the labour market as they changed jobs. Their career history is made up of a series of stepping stones in temporary contracts which they use to move on to their next transition.

Participant 2 is an excellent example of those on the 'right-foot'-'slow-track'. Upon graduation from his politics and philosophy degree at Glasgow University, he had the intention of being involved in politics and to eventually become a politician. To this end, he takes up his first job as an MP's press assistant but leaves this job after nine months as he recognises that experience in London is a must in realising his career aim. When his first contract comes to an end, he secures a researcher position in a public relations agency despite a pay cut. He then refines his preferences through this experience. Work in this public relations agency requires that he works for private companies which he realises is against his personal and political views. Following this, he first identifies an opportunity to work for the Labour Party in the Britain in Europe campaign then another one in the European Parliament in Brussels and accepts yet another pay cut. He rationalises the pay cuts as *'the price to pay for all this experience'*. Once his contract in Brussels runs out, he comes back to Scotland and wants to give his career a new direction to add variety to his expertise in

politics. This decision, however, slows his career down as he could not identify where/how to change his career direction and he spends more than two years in a call centre. He manages to move out on to a job which fits with his personal views and interests in the NHS. Yet, he had to leave this job due to the temporary nature of the project and finds himself working as a waiter for another year. These few years in his career have been the lowest points, as upon graduation he had identified himself as a *'highflyer or something like that'*. He could not secure interviews during this time. He rationalises this on the 'stigma' created on his CV by working in call centres and restaurants. At the time of the interview, he had managed to secure yet another temporary contract with a job that was in line with his knowledge, skills and personal views as an external affairs officer in a voluntary organisation. This, according to his description, puts him back on the 'right-track':

I would say, the first couple years of my career were stepping stones. And it was good to get those jobs or I wouldn't be here if I hadn't. So my career started pretty well. I was pretty determined. I guess in the middle, it's been a hit back. I think probably the decision to work for the call centre was a mistake but at the same time if I hadn't done that I wouldn't be able to get the job in the NHS. I have no doubt about that. And perhaps if I persevered I may have had something better in the NHS but I don't regret a second of my time in the NHS and I'm glad of the experience. But the thing between that and where I am now is obviously a low point. Obviously not part of the plan and not something I enjoy a lot. (Participant 2)

Similar to Participant 2's progression Participant 23 also changes jobs between temporary contracts and builds knowledge and expertise as he does so. He moves from being an HR trainee to an HR advisor within three years after graduation. He leaves the first organisation because even though he was later promoted to be the personnel officer, he perceives little opportunities for further progression as he felt he "*was always going to be viewed as the trainee*". The difference from Participant 2, however, is that he uses his degree and interest in the nature of work (HR) to support his interests outside of work, i.e., travelling:

When I first started my permanent job it was great because I got a flat and everything. But when I was determined to go around the world, I was quite happy to sell my flat and my car and leave my job and just go. When I came back, I suppose I wasn't a hundred percent sure what I was thinking of doing in the long-term. So I was pretty happy to be in an interim job, when it ends it gives me an opportunity to do something else like travel and come back again. So for about a year I was quite happy to be in temporary or interim roles for that period. They were supporting my interests and providing me with finance. I was just drifting between jobs and my degree would give me the direction. I didn't feel any particular attraction to any of the organisations I worked for at the time, that doesn't mean to say I didn't work hard but I had no inclination to stay in any of them for any great length of time. (Participant 23)

As observed in Appendix V, similar to career histories of 'right-foot'-'slow-track' participants, career progression for those on the 'wrong-foot'-'slow-track' also

involve a number of stepping stones. Nevertheless, transitions observed amongst the 'wrong-foot'-'slow-track' participants largely reflect the process they go through to find their specialisation in the GLM. This is reflected, for instance, in the higher propensity of these participants to complete postgraduate degrees later on in their careers (eight out of 12) in comparison to those on the 'right-foot'-'slow-track' (N=0). This was either because they felt this was the only way to improve their chances of finding a 'good' job (e.g., Participant 21, Participant 26) or because they felt they came across a barrier in their progression which they will be unable to pass unless they specialise (e.g., Participant 28, Participant 31).

When I wanted to go for the officer level, when I got my first job I found it very difficult to move on to similar levels they all said you must be qualified or must be willing to... I had lots of people turned me down because of that. So I realised I need to do this in order to move on. The recruitment agent I got friends with said to me 'I'm more than happy to put you up for interviews because that shows the calibre of people I've got on the book but it all comes down to same thing: excellent interview but not qualified.' I had it so many times now. (Participant 28)

We also observe transitions to different areas of work to be more common with these graduates (see Appendix V). For instance, at the most extreme, Participant 26 spends the first five and a half years of her career working as, in chronological order: call centre representative, newspaper reporter, call centre representative and administrator, before she launches her career in web development. Similarly, Participant 29 after starting as an administrative

assistant, changes area of work as well as his employer with the subsequent two transitions: on to assistant service manager and technical business consultant jobs. Moreover, experience of redundancy and unemployment appear to be more common amongst 'wrong-foot'- 'slow-track' participants (N=4), in comparison to those on the 'right-foot'- 'slow-track' (N=0):

In contrast to the career histories in the 'slow-track', those of participants in the 'fast-track' (N=15), regardless of whether they experienced early underemployment (N=3) or not (N=12), contain fewer transitions and often they stay with the same employer (for the 'wrong-foot'- 'fast-track' participants, this applies once they have moved out of underemployment in the first job). At the most extreme, two participants on the 'right-foot'- 'fast-track' (Participant 7 and Participant 17) had secured a 'job for life' and felt no need to change jobs/organisations (*"they wrote in the letter "this is a permanent job". I didn't understand at first that it meant that I was in it forever. But I kept that letter very carefully."* Participant 17).

Most (N=11 out of 15) participants on the 'fast-track' describe a sense of pride in working for their organisations, yet at the same time a perceived ease of moving out if the organisation stops satisfying their needs in the future:

I have a loyalty to the bank. But if I see a better opportunity for me, not just in terms of salary, but opportunities in terms of the role I wouldn't be keen on staying. They've been good to me. At the end of the day, the company has done a lot for me. But every major company is the same, you're usually replaceable. If I see

something that I wanted to do and I had the opportunity, I wouldn't have any problems. (Participant 16)

Participant 18, for instance, changed organisations after three years in one of the large graduate employers as *“they changed the management structure, there was absolutely no where for [him] to go, no room”*. This also reflects their high perceived employability at all times, which is another common observation amongst these graduates who kept on the ‘right-track’ since graduation: Keeping their CSM ongoing and a general perceived availability of alternatives based on this:

I think given my experiences over the last few years, I think I'd be able to find something I enjoy. I use LinkedIn, myself and a couple of my colleagues who do similar work regularly get contacted by people with serious propositions and offers. One of the consultancy firms we work with, someone from there offered me a job as well, kind of under the radar. I think the work we do, we have a lot of transferable skills. But I wouldn't necessarily want to change at the minute. ... I kind of like to think that I'm capable of looking after myself. And I feel that I've got a decent enough skill set and approach to life, that if things start to go wrong in the company I can get out and move elsewhere. (Participant 20)

Well-being and career satisfaction following early underemployment

Exploring the effect of the experience of early underemployment on graduate well-being and career satisfaction, this section compares these career-related outcomes for ‘stuck’, ‘wrong-foot’-‘right-track’ and ‘right-foot’-‘right-track’ participants (P11).

All 'stuck' participants revealed a perception of constant underemployment and negative psychological well-being, reflected in feelings of being undervalued, underestimated and 'stuck', and a disbelief in the use of their degrees. Not being able to secure better jobs, not being perceived worthy of responsibilities in their current work and in the external labour market, and not earning enough money to sustain had a negative toll on participants' self-esteem and overall well-being. This was to such an extent that Participant 10, who works on a casual basis, has revealed that when he does not get called for work for a while he 'forgets to eat or doesn't eat' and is usually underweight.

I feel totally undervalued. I also lost faith in the degrees I have and in my knowledge. I think I lost confidence, too. It's all about having luck. I don't think I had any yet. I'm generally positive when it comes to anything and I do hope things will turn out with this job situation, too. There is no confidence in my ability whatsoever. The more lack of confidence visible, the more you mess up because you're nervous because you're not performing to your best anyway. I keep thinking something has to happen (Participant 32).

Apart from this negative effect on psychological and physical well-being of 'stuck' participants, a boost in psychological well-being, in particular self-esteem was mentioned by almost half (N=7) of the 'wrong-foot'-'right-track' participants. This was because self-esteem was boosted for these participants by being able to move out of underemployment and was dampened during redundancies:

You're going through a period of uneasiness. You're uncertain about the future. So, a lot of feelings you go through. ... It was definitely a time of uncertainty but at the same time it was a challenge to secure a new job. You can say it's a life changing moment. You couldn't envisage this happening when you're out of university. (Participant 25)

Not surprisingly then, graduates' who were 'stuck' in non-graduate occupations felt little or no career satisfaction. This was partly due to their own expectations of a graduate career and partly to encouragement from others prior to starting university as to opportunities in the labour market in return for their education, which failed to realise for these graduates. This was also reflected in their salaries, where, for instance, after five years of work experience Participant 22 was earning between £13,521 and £16,120 per year.

I'm not satisfied in that I don't think I've achieved very much or that I've pushed myself very much or gone places very much... When I think about it, it still seems to be blank. I can't think of anything I actually want to do, so I try not to think of anything. I'm just focusing on what's immediately in front of me. ... I feel like I've wasted my last three years, just being miserable and not doing anything but maybe that's the journey I needed to take to finally find some sort of peace or satisfaction. (Participant 11)

Surprisingly, the economically inactive participant (Participant 37), who since leaving university in 2003 never had a job apart from part-time student work as he has spent those seven years either travelling or doing a second degree, still

had a positive future outlook and had no negative attitudes or feelings towards his 'career':

I kind of had this thing in my mind 30s is the time you work, so I think that was why my 20s were kind of drifted here and there. ... I want to design cars. Because I've been studying uni and I don't really have work experience or a design portfolio and it makes it quite difficult for me. I think I'll do a Masters but at my age I should really start working. (Participant 37)

Exploring career satisfaction for 'wrong-foot'-'right-track' participants, it is observed that regardless of the route they followed (i.e., 'slow' vs 'fast'), participants who moved out of early underemployment were commonly content with their career progression so far. The content of satisfaction, however, varied. Graduates who followed the 'slow-track' out of underemployment generally refer to their career history as a 'backwards' process (*"I think I was very late getting onto any kind of career"* Participant 26), where they feel had they identified their strengths and opportunities in the labour market sooner they would be more successful in terms of their achievements (*"I think a lot my friends from uni went directly into a salary I'm in only now"* Participant 29). The great majority of the 'slow-track' graduates were earning salaries between £18,721 and £28,080 per year.

I've learnt a lot, it's been very useful. Life changing experiences. I wouldn't wish it upon anyone to go through it. ... Without a shadow of a doubt I'd definitely instead of working from a backwards process I know most students do: get a job and decide whether I like it, instead of identifying what their

strengths are and what kind of jobs they'd like to do, etc. I would definitely change that. (Participant 25)

While career satisfaction was mainly related to individual's initiative at building a career for themselves in the 'wrong-foot'-'slow-track', 'wrong-foot'-'fast-track' participants commonly include individual as well as organisational initiatives in supporting career development. Similar to the above description, these graduates, however, also admit that they could have arrived where they are sooner. In comparison to 'wrong-foot'-'slow-track' participants, 'wrong-foot'-'fast-track' participants were earning higher salaries at the time of interview: For instance, Participant 15 ('wrong-foot'-'slow-track') was earning between £22,361 and £28,080, while Participant 33 ('wrong-foot'-'fast-track') was earning between £28,081 and £35,360 per year.

Career satisfaction ... very much mixed, because obviously I've taken a while to get a good job. In terms of how I've done my job I was always successful and enjoyed them. I'm pleased I got this job so it's been relatively successful... I was a bit frustrated that it took me so long. I wished I'd got the job sooner. But I'm pleased I found it. ... I've always known that you need to have a career but it's a lot more planned now. Because the organisation to an extent has it planned out for you but the time scales are flexible. They say you want to be here in a certain amount of time but if you take longer it's OK. They know where you want to go, so in terms of that it's more structured. (Participant 15)

Amongst the participants who started on the 'wrong-foot,' drifters' accounts of career success were commonly very modest, as they unequivocally claim that

they “*don’t think about [their] career at all*” (Participant 14), as they “*have never planned any of this*” (Participant 30) and that they have been ‘*fortunate*’ (Participant 1). Despite this modesty, however, Participant 30 was earning between £35,361 and £45,240 per year in her HR manager position.

Little differences were observed between ‘wrong-foot’-‘right-track’ and ‘right-foot’-‘right-track’ participants’ accounts of career satisfaction. More specifically, the only difference was the former’s reference to having started their career late, in a backward fashion. Similar to ‘wrong-foot’-‘slow-track’ participants’ description of career success, those on the ‘right-foot’-‘slow-track’ also made reference to their own personal achievements, as they had built their career by a series of stepping stones (e.g., Participant 5). ‘Right-foot’-‘fast-track’ participants’ descriptions of career success resembled that of ‘wrong-foot’-‘fast-track’ in their emphasis on both their knowledge, skills and abilities and the support they have received from their organisation in career development (e.g., Participant 6)

I hope and expect to have a career that is stimulating and where I can use my skills effectively, and I’m always trying to achieve that. You don’t have a choice in working, you have to work and you might as well try to be comfortable with it and earn as much as you possibly can while balancing your life. ... I recognised that I’m good in my career. I think the life experience is good. Obviously, I’m a bit more mature now. (Participant 5)

I would say I’m happy in my career. I think I added to my strengths, I was fortunate to be given the right opportunities and the right level of work. (Participant 6)

Chapter conclusions

With the objective of exploring career mobility for graduates, using career history analysis from 37 graduates who are in the first 10 years of employment in the UK, this chapter explored graduates' entry into and movement out of underemployment and the spill-over effects of this early experience on later career progression and outcomes. The findings showed that career indecision and discouragement from the GLM have a crucial role in entry into underemployment. It was found here that career indecision and discouragement from the GLM were more common amongst those participants who engaged in little or no CSM. The relationships between career indecision (P1) and discouragement from the GLM (P2), and perceived employability were found to be in the contrary direction to that proposed. In other words, the interview data showed that career indecision and discouragement from the GLM due to lack of CSM lowered perceived employability. Moreover, in most cases where participants experienced career indecision upon graduation, this resulted in discouragement from the GLM due to futile applications to large graduate employers. In exploring the role of career indecision and discouragement from the GLM (P3 and P4) it was found that while for a minority of participants both had direct effects on underemployment in the first job, for the majority it was an indirect effect via perceived employability, particularly for those from ASH courses. These findings provide partial support for the propositions developed for exploring graduates' entry into underemployment (see bold paths on Figure 9.4).

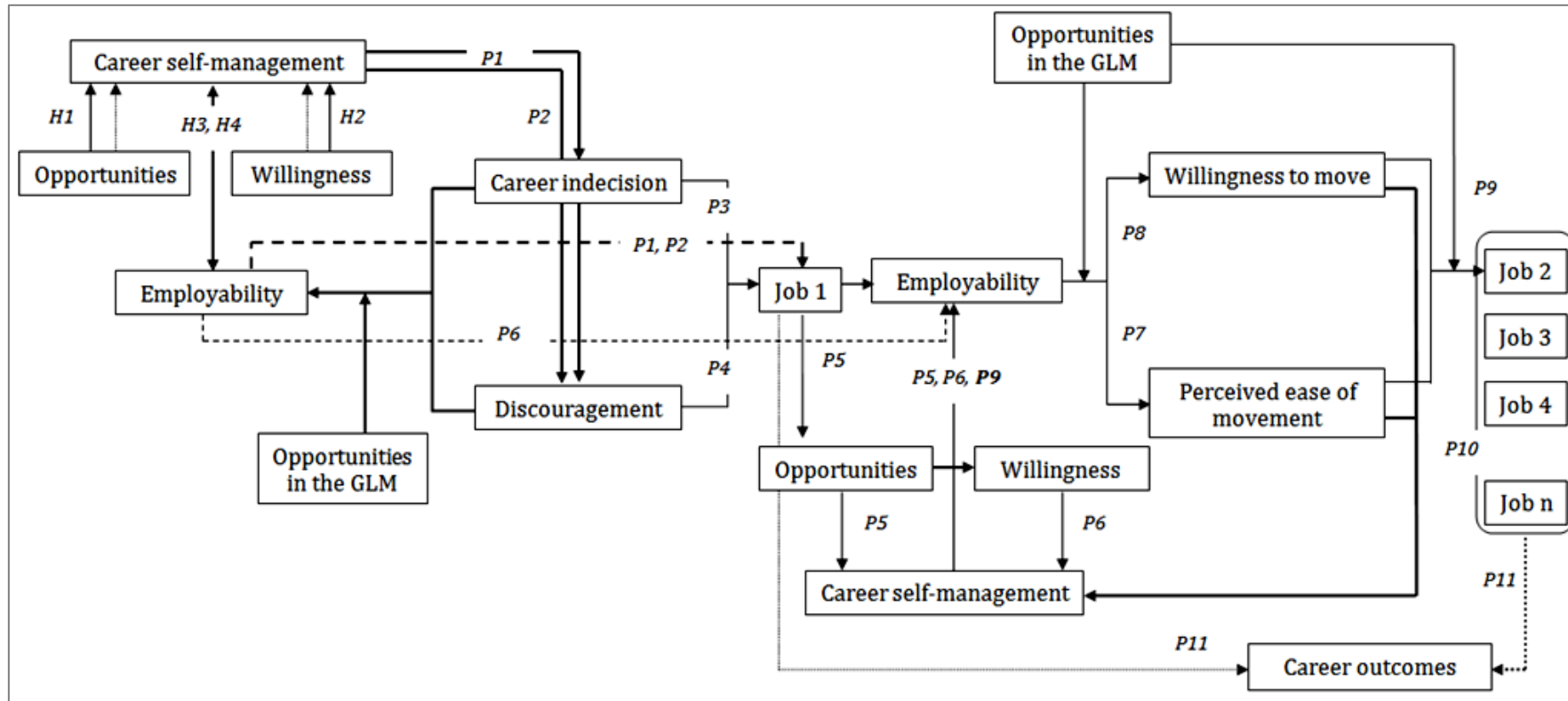
In exploring transition out of underemployment for those who started on the 'wrong-foot' (N=20), the career history analysis showed that lack of opportunities provided by the job (P5) and prior employability perceptions (P6) restrained engagement in CSM and dampened employability development for a minority of 'wrong-foot' participants (N=5). For the remainder of 'wrong-foot' participants, however, lack of development opportunities provided by the job either acted as socialisation into the way the industry works or increased their willingness to engage in CSM to get out of their predicament and increased engagement in CSM (in the form of job search, networking and completing postgraduate qualifications) and positively affected perceived employability (see Figure 9.4, bold path from opportunities to willingness). These findings provide partial support for P5 and P6. Supporting P7, perceived employability was associated with perceived ease of movement, particularly for non-ASH participants. Contrary to P8, however, experience of underemployment, regardless of employability perceptions and availability of alternatives in the GLM, was associated with willingness to move for all 'wrong-foot' participants (see Figure 9.4, bold path from Job 1 to willingness to move). It was emerged from the career history data that participants who have high willingness to move and high perceived ease of movement further increased the CSM, while for those who had high willingness to move yet low perceived ease of movement this translated in a belief of futility in CSM (see Figure 9.4, bold path from perceived ease of movement and willingness to move to career self-management).

Exploring the quality of transitions out of underemployment (P9), we observe from 'wrong-foot'-'right-track' participants' career histories that the great majority has moved on to associate professional or administrative occupations, suggesting quality of transitions out of underemployment was negatively affected due to the limited availability of high skilled occupations. Further exploring 'wrong-foot'-'right-track' participants' career progression (P10) the data has showed that in comparison to those who start on the 'right-track' job transitions for this group were largely realised within the intermediate segment of the GLM, mostly in associate professional occupations. Early underemployment only affected psychological well-being and career satisfaction negatively for 'stuck' participants. Despite the finding that this early experience was almost unequivocally mentioned in relation to career satisfaction amongst the 'wrong-foot'-'right-track' participants, no overall differences were observed on psychological well-being and career satisfaction of 'right-foot' and 'wrong-foot' 'right-track' participants. This provides only partial support for P11 (see Figure 9.4, bold link from career progression to career outcomes).

In summary, the findings from career history analyses using interview data showed that career indecision and discouragement from the GLM are common experiences upon graduation from university. Both career indecision and discouragement from the GLM are instrumental in development of unfavourable employability perceptions, and thereby, in graduates' start to careers in underemployment. This effect is particularly more pronounced for

graduates from ASH courses. The findings further show that experience of underemployment does not negatively influence perceived employability if it provides socialisation to the world of work and increases willingness to engage in CSM. Moreover, regardless of perceived employability, underemployment increases willingness to move, yet perceived ease of movement largely depends on the actual availability of alternatives. Perceived ease of movement and willingness to move facilitate movement out of underemployment by CSM. Movement out of underemployment, however, does not necessarily indicate moving on to high skilled work. Career progression for those who experienced early underemployment and moved out largely realise within the intermediate segment of the GLM, yet this does not dampen psychological well-being and career satisfaction. Theoretical and practical implications of these findings are next discussed in Chapter Ten.

Figure 9.4 Summary of findings from graduate career history analysis in entry into and movement out of underemployment, and the spill-over effects on career progression and outcomes



Chapter Ten

10. DISCUSSION

Based on an assumption of limitless opportunities in the so-called knowledge economy, skills policies in the UK and the 'new' career discourse emphasise the role of individual responsibility and self-directedness in securing employment and developing careers. Nevertheless, the increasing evidence with regards to pervasiveness, and to some extent persistence, of graduate underemployment, particularly based on social and educational background, at least in early careers, contradicts these assumptions. This suggests that, if as stressed by the 'new' career discourse and the skills policies, self-directedness, via career self-management (CSM), and employability is the key to securing 'good' jobs, then it is either that some graduates lack CSM skills due to their social and educational background or that, despite CSM and perceived employability, these graduates face barriers in the GLM in securing high skilled employment. This inconsistency between research evidence and the policy and theory perspective formed the practical and theoretical rationale for this research on contemporary graduate careers. Based on this rationale, this research aimed to examine (i) the factors associated with enhancing graduate employability and

the extent to which this reflects a self-directed process; and (ii) the occupational boundaries within which graduate careers develop, to question the assumption of limitlessness of opportunities for graduates in the GLM; and treating graduate underemployment from a job transition perspective, to explore (iii) graduate career mobility, starting with graduates' entry into underemployment extending up to ten years after graduation to understand the role of graduate employability on starting careers in underemployment, the temporality of early underemployment and the new career patterns that emerge in the GLM.

Overall, findings from the survey of 2009/2010 graduates, the 2006 Skills Survey and graduate interviews in the UK provided evidence to question the assumption of limitlessness of opportunities in the GLM and the strong emphasis on self-directedness in employability development, and employment and career outcomes by highlighting a role for educational, social and occupational constraints in graduate career development. Crucially, however, this research suggests that individual responsibility and CSM are at the centre of contemporary graduate careers due to the *boundaries* of the GLM.

More specifically, an examination of the determinants and the role of CSM on graduate employability using data from the survey of 2009/2010 graduates and graduate interviews in Chapter Seven showed that (i) CSM is determined by a combination of an individual's willingness (self-esteem and preferences) and opportunities (social and educational background) to engage in CSM (H1 and H2); and that (ii) graduate employability upon graduation depends not only on the extent to which they engage in CSM (in particular job search and guidance

seeking) but also indirectly on the factors that determine CSM (H3 and H4), particularly on self-esteem and educational history (i.e., work experience, degree subject and degree class). These findings suggest that graduate employability, at least at the start of careers, is formed as a result of a process which involves not only graduates' willingness but also opportunities to enhance employability. Hence, employability development may not be as self-directed as argued to be by the 'new' career discourse and skills policies in the UK (see Figure 10.1 for a summary of research findings).

Using the 2006 Skills Survey and graduate interview data, Chapter Eight examined the occupational boundaries of the GLM in order to understand territory within which graduate careers develop. This showed that employment in 'emerging' graduate occupations formed a grey segment in the GLM, evidenced in the differences in job quality (particularly in job complexity, work skills and intrinsic aspect of jobs; H5) and employment-related outcomes (in job satisfaction, organisational commitment, career satisfaction and negative carry-over from work; H6) for graduates in 'emerging' occupations in comparison to those in traditional and non-graduate occupations. Moreover, intrinsic aspects of work (particularly skill use and task discretion), which differentiate 'emerging' occupations from traditional and non-graduate occupations, were found to be the most important determinants of employment-related outcomes (H7). These findings contradict the assumption of limitless opportunities in the UK GLM and suggest that graduate careers are realised in an increasingly

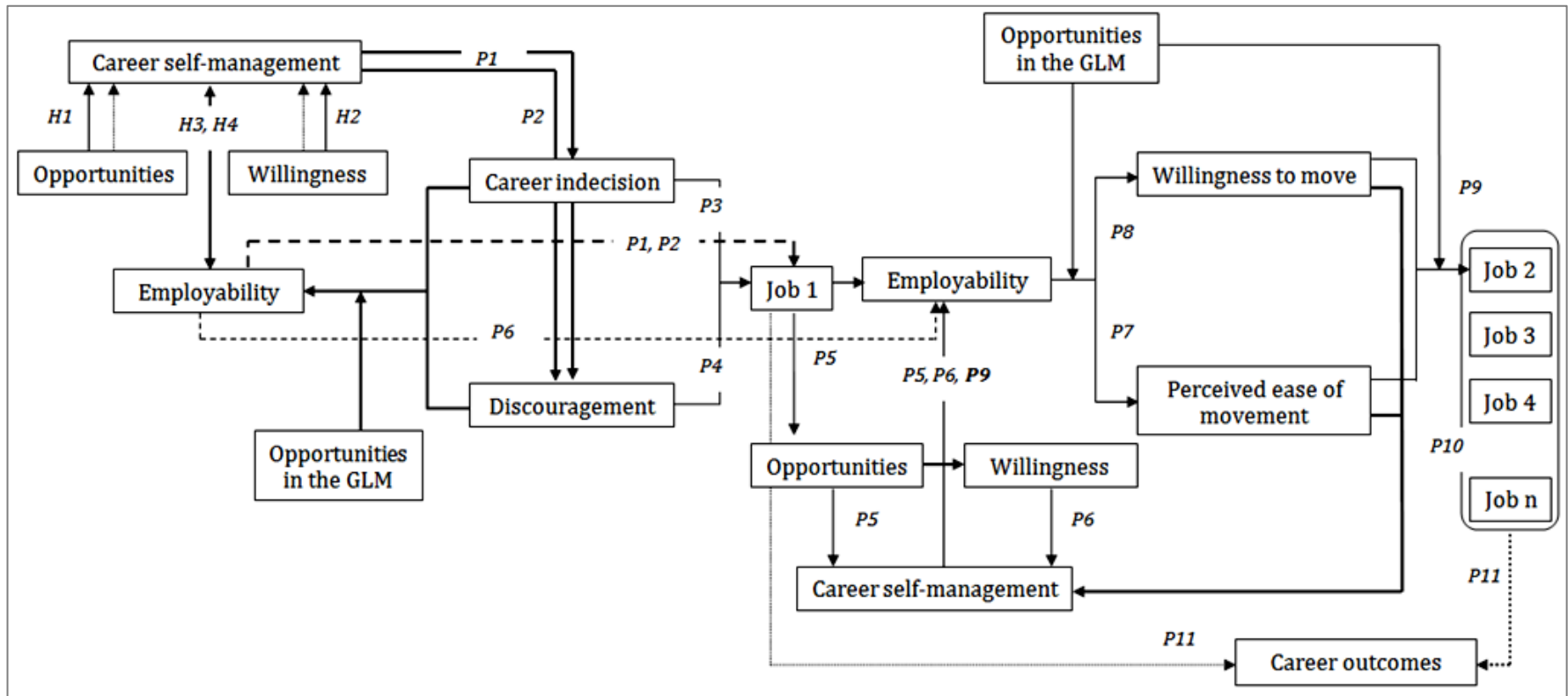
segmented territory which is differentiated by the intrinsic aspects of jobs that lead to development through work.

Career mobility for graduates, i.e., entry into and movement out of early underemployment and the spill-over effects of this experience on later job transitions and career outcomes, was explored using career history analysis from semi-structured, in-depth interview data from 37 graduates who were within the first ten years of employment in the UK. This showed that in graduates' entry into underemployment, (i) CSM and its determinants (particularly educational background) had a role in graduates' early career indecision (P1) and discouragement from the GLM (P2) which negatively influenced graduate employability; and (ii) unfavourable employability perceptions due to career indecision (P3) and discouragement from the GLM (P4) were instrumental in graduates' start to careers on the 'wrong-foot', particularly for those from arts, social sciences and humanities (ASH) backgrounds, for whom opportunities in the GLM are assumed to be limited in this research. The interview data pointed that early graduate underemployment affects graduates' further CSM and perceived employability due to lack of opportunities provided by the job (P5) and graduates' prior CSM skills and perceived employability (P6). Experience of underemployment, regardless of perceived employability, was associated with a willingness to move out for all who started on the 'wrong-foot' (P8). However, poor employability perceptions, particularly for ASH graduates, resulted in a perceived difficulty of movement (P7). Hence, for most of those who moved out of early underemployment (i.e.,

'wrong-foot'-'right-track'), apart from the drifters (who were rather indifferent to their career development), both willingness and perceived ease of movement were instrumental. The interview data has shown that this movement depends on the availability of alternatives in the GLM as all non-ASH 'wrong-foot' participants moved on to 'right-track' while all 'stuck' participants were from ASH backgrounds (P8). Nevertheless, the interview data suggested that the great majority of 'wrong-foot'-'right-track' participants moved on to 'emerging' graduate occupations, which are shown to be of inferior quality in Chapter Eight, suggesting that quality of transitions depends on the availability of alternatives in the GLM (P9). Exploring job transitions for graduates who moved out of early underemployment ('wrong-foot'-'right-track') with those who secured 'good' jobs early on ('right-foot'-'right-track'), the interviews show that career patterns on the 'right-track' can be further differentiated into 'slow-' and 'fast-track', where the former commonly takes place within the intermediate segment of the GLM with frequent job transitions while the latter materialises within the limited high skilled segment. Providing support for P10, it was observed that the great majority of 'wrong-foot'-'right-track' participants developed careers within the 'slow-track', whereas the reverse was the case for 'right-foot'-'right-track' participants. Finally, despite different career patterns, early underemployment only negatively effected well-being and career satisfaction within ten years of employment for 'stuck' graduates. There were no differences between 'wrong-foot'-'right-track' and 'right-foot'-'right-track' participants' overall well-being and career satisfaction, apart from those of content. This provides partial support for P11 (see Figure 10.1 for a summary of

research findings). Overall, these findings on graduate career mobility in the UK suggest that the individual responsibility in securing employment and developing careers, at least in the first ten years of employment, may be overemphasised in the skills policies and the 'new' career discourse by neglecting the role of social, educational and occupational constraints within which graduate careers realise. More specifically, by treating graduate underemployment from a job transition perspective, the findings from career history analyses (i) inform of the crucial role played by perceived employability, in particular career identity and adaptability components, in graduates' entry into and movement out of underemployment; (ii) question the temporality of underemployment for graduates in the UK; and (iii) identify different career patterns that emerged in the GLM as a result of HE expansion. This chapter next discusses the theoretical and practical/policy-related implications of these findings.

Figure 10.1 Summary of research findings



Note. Paths in bold indicate non-hypothesised/proposed relationships that emerged from the graduate interview data.

Theoretical implications

Occupational boundaries of the graduate labour market

Examination of job quality and employment-related outcomes across graduate occupations using the 2006 Skills Survey and interview data in Chapter Eight shows that 'emerging' graduate occupations differ significantly from traditional (high skilled) and non-graduate (low skilled) occupations and 'boundedness' of 'good' jobs to the highly skilled segment. This suggests limited evidence of 'upskilling' in intermediate occupations to accommodate the highly skilled workforce and 'boundedness' of opportunities for skill use and development to the high skilled 'lovely' occupations.

While it may be that some emerging graduate occupations (e.g., nursing and HRM) are in the process of professionalization (Law & Aranda, 2010), ready acceptance of these as equivalent to traditional graduate career routes may merely be a 'definitional trap' (Keep & Mayhew, 2004), which fails to capture meaningful differences in job quality and employment-related outcomes. The differences found in this research in job quality, such as the importance of gradueness skills, opportunity for skill use, and to a lesser extent, task discretion, continue to differentiate professional status (Scott, 2008). This suggests that within the 'lovely' - 'lousy' polarisation of jobs, 'emerging' graduate occupations still stand in the stable middle (Holmes, 2010), but form a segment of their own within the graduate labour market with respect to job quality. This segregation is largely attributable to the intrinsic features of work as observed in their effects on differentiating employment-related outcomes in

'emerging' occupations from those in traditional and non-graduate occupations. Graduatisation of these occupations is still a work in progress; one which graduates' need to adapt to and has important implications for definition and development of employability, and for career mobility.

A closer look at the findings with respect to the individual elements of job quality allows differentiating 'emerging' occupations from traditional and non-graduate occupations more precisely and understanding of the boundaries of the GLM. Overall, the differences in job complexity between 'emerging' and professional graduate occupations suggest a degree of credential inflation (P. Brown, 2003) and a difficulty or perhaps unwillingness on the demand side in absorbing the university qualified workforce into jobs that not only require a university degree to get but also to do. In particular, the differences observed in the descriptions of the interview participants in relation learning and training time to become proficient on the job between 'emerging' and professional occupations suggest that the former are inferior to the latter. The rapid routinisation of the low and intermediate skilled jobs means graduates in these occupations lag behind on some of the developmental opportunities provided through high skilled jobs. On the other hand, compared to low skilled non-graduate occupations, employment in 'emerging' occupations may represent *less* underemployment in terms of job complexity, and, hence, for many 'wrong-foot' interview participants was a way out of early underemployment.

With regards to work skills, similar differences have been reported between the overqualified versus the adequately employed (Green & McIntosh, 2007) as

those between 'emerging' and professional occupations. Ironically, these skills also correspond to the skills shortages reported by employers (e.g., planning and organising, numeracy), but a similar percentage of skill shortage vacancies have been reported for managerial (19%), professional (23%) and associate professional (20%) occupations (Shury et al., 2010). It can be argued that the equal importance of some work skills across occupational categories (i.e., horizontal communication, problem-solving) reflects the increasingly relational nature of all work which revolves around teamworking or responding to unpredictable work and customer demands (Gregory, Zissimos, & Greenhalgh, 2001). However, while the importance of these skills were rated similarly high by interview participants, their description of the importance of these skills suggest that those in higher skilled jobs make higher use of these skills, suggesting even more differences in work skills and opportunities to use skills. Moreover, computer skills were only found to be lower in the other low skilled occupations, possibly due to the non-routine yet service-based nature of these occupations. These findings suggest, employability skills highlighted by skills policies and sought after in recruitment and selection are not necessarily realised/utilised in employment (Holmes, 2011) and that there is evidence of limited 'graduatisation' in 'emerging' graduate occupations with regards to skill differences on the job, yet a boundedness of opportunity for skill use.

The findings in differences on intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of job quality support the graduate premium for 'emerging' occupations (Elias & Purcell, 2011), as compared to non-graduate occupations they were paid significantly

higher. Nonetheless, examination of differences with regards to intrinsic aspects of work, in particular perceived skill use and opportunity for skill use, questions the assumption that 'emerging' occupations are the 'new' graduate occupations. This is also supported by differences in employment-related outcomes where intrinsic features of work explained a greater variance in attitudes and well-being. Lack of contribution to attitudes and well-being observed in relation to overall gradueness skills and training and development suggest that it is the development *through* work that forms employment-related outcomes (Korpi & Tåhlin, 2009b). This is clearly reflected in interview participants' common reference to (lack of) challenge on the job, particularly when discussing job satisfaction. Moreover, the finding that job quality, in particular intrinsic aspects of work, contribute to these differences demonstrate employers' reluctance for job redesign and the importance of adapting organisational policies and practices to make efficient use of the highly skilled workforce. This also reflects the difficulty observed in some interview participants' formation of perceived employability for 'graduate' level work and adaptation of expectations to match jobs that are not necessarily highly skilled. Lack of statistically significant differences, on job security, work intensity and task discretion may reflect the changing nature of work for all. This resonates with evidence for declining task discretion and job security and increasing work intensity across occupational groups within the UK, especially for associate professionals (Felstead et al., 2007).

In general, there was a lack of differences between 'emerging' and managerial occupations, e.g., in job complexity, work skills and aspects of job quality. Data from the interviews suggested some degree of arbitrariness in labelling of occupations, particularly with regards to skill use and development. Different from professional occupations, where historically qualifications mark the entry route (Lester, 2009), managerial occupations do not necessarily require a university degree but an accumulation of "significant amount of knowledge and experience" (ONS, 2000, p. 37). Similarly, graduates are argued to 'create market niches' for themselves based on the knowledge gained via university (Purcell & Elias, 2004). An examination of the SOC(HE) (Elias & Purcell, 2004b) categories reveals that traditionally non-graduate managerial occupations, such as marketing, sales and retail managers, are now regarded as the 'new' graduate occupations due to the proportion of graduates working in these jobs. In this regard, the lack of differences between managerial and 'emerging' graduate occupations may, in fact, reflect the inherent differences between the former and professional occupations (Baron & Bielby, 1986), rather than an 'upskilling' in 'emerging' occupations. Particularly, the lack of statistically significant effect of job quality explaining the difference between managerial and 'emerging' occupations on organisational commitment then may be explained by the status enhancing effect (Chillas, 2010) of having a managerial title.

Overall, these findings suggest that we observe different 'shades' of available 'graduate' jobs in the GLM within which graduate career realise. Particularly, intrinsic features of work that lead to development appear to differentiate

'emerging' occupations from traditional and non-graduate occupations. In understanding contemporary graduate careers, this suggests differential opportunities provided by the job to facilitate CSM and enhance employability, the effects of which on graduate employability are reflected in the definitional issues discussed below. It can be argued, therefore, that the 'new' career discourse and the vocational psychology research are flawed in their assumption of limitless opportunities in today's so-called knowledge economy. With increasing graduate employment in intermediate skilled 'emerging' occupations and slow job growth at the higher end of the GLM, this suggests that career development is bounded by the structure of occupations. This chapter next discusses the theoretical implications of the findings in relation to employability for graduates within this segmented GLM.

Graduate employability

In examining the factors associated with enhancing graduate employability and the extent to which this reflects a self-directed process, the findings from Chapter Seven and Chapter Nine, while highlighting a role for motivational factors also suggest that development of graduate employability may not be as self-directed as argued to be. In other words, it is found in this research that it is not only graduates' willingness but also opportunities to engage in CSM that appear to determine perceived employability. Moreover, in defining graduate employability, findings suggest that ironically in today's so-called knowledge economy, graduate knowledge, skills and abilities are necessary but not sufficient to define graduate employability. Instead, it can be argued here that

formation of career identity and adaptability to realities of GLM stand out as more important components for defining graduate employability. This section first discusses the research findings in relation the self-directedness of employability then considers definitional issues on graduate employability.

Determinants of career self-management and employability upon graduation

Career self-management to enhance employability is commonly treated as a motivational/self-regulated construct in the vocational psychology and the 'new' career literature (e.g., De Vos & Soens, 2008; Quigley & Tymon Jr, 2006). Evidence from the survey of 2009/2010 graduates and graduate interviews in Chapter Seven showed that at the start of careers, graduate employability was determined directly by the extent to which graduates engage in CSM, in particular job search and guidance seeking, and indirectly by their willingness (self-esteem and career goals) and opportunities (educational and, to a lesser extent, social background) to do so via CSM. Moreover, career history analysis using interview data in Chapter Nine pointed that at the start of careers, perceived employability was closely associated with graduates' career indecision and discouragement from the GLM which were rooted in a general lack of CSM, largely attributed to educational (i.e., degree subject, work experience and degree class) and, to a lesser extent, social background. This suggests that, upon graduation, perceived graduate employability is formed as a process of engaging in CSM, the extent to which is determined not only by self-directedness but also by the social and educational constraints that affect

engagement in CSM, and experience of career indecision and discouragement from the GLM. Thus, it can be argued here that CSM and, hence, employability are both internally and externally regulated.

Supporting the 'new' career discourse and vocational psychology research (Bridgstock, 2009; De Vos et al., 2011; De Vos & Soens, 2008; Wittekind, Raeder, & Grote, 2010), CSM was found to predict graduates' perceived employability. In particular, data from both the survey of 2009/2010 graduates and graduate interviews showed job search and guidance seeking as important indicators of perceived employability. These two components of CSM may be likened to 'mobility preparedness' and 'developmental feedback seeking' dimensions identified by Kossek et al. (1998) and are argued to contribute to perceived employability as they help clarify career options in the labour market and understand the ease of entry into them (Clarke, 2008; Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). Moreover, providing support for the self-directedness of CSM and employability, the findings from the survey of 2009/2010 graduates suggested a strong role for self-esteem, while those from graduate interviews pointed to preference clarity (formulating clear career goals) in the extent to which graduates engage in CSM and develop favourable employability perceptions. Both self-esteem and career goals may be likened to career identity (self-awareness) or *know-why* component of career motivation and employability, relating to questions of 'who am I?' and 'who I want to be?' (De Fillippi & Arthur, 1994; London, 1983). It is argued that career identity is the directional component, driving career-related behaviour. Hence, those who cannot form a

direction to their careers upon graduation from university appear to struggle the most, as reflected in the prevalence of career indecision amongst the interview participants.

Development of career direction upon graduation, however, was found to be related to educational experiences, as reflected in higher propensity of career indecision and discouragement from the GLM amongst the interview participants from non-professional degree courses. Lack of clear career routes associated with ASH courses was a major hindrance in formation of goals and in activities directed towards enhancing employability and, in turn, had a role on formation of employability perceptions via career indecision. This is in line with the anticipatory socialisation research, which suggests that students in the professional degree courses are generally socialised into employment throughout their degree courses which tend to be closely related to future employment and are monitored and accredited by the relevant professional bodies to ensure quality of education and graduates' readiness for employment (Scholarios et al., 2003). On the other hand, students in the more general, non-professional degree courses are not adequately socialised into specific employment as they receive academic subject knowledge with very little relevance to actual employment and there are "no prescribed entry routes" or career paths associated with these degrees (Harvey, 2001; Scholarios et al., 2003). The role played by degree subject on CSM and, therefore, on career indecision suggests that self-directedness of employability, at least partly, depends on the actual availability of opportunities.

Curiously though, findings from the survey of 2009/2010 graduates also showed that ASH participants differed from non-ASH participants on self-exploration component of CSM. This may be explained by findings in adolescent development that suggest students' introspectiveness influence the subjects they choose to study; high introspection was found to be associated with students choosing more 'self-oriented' subjects, such as arts and humanities (Hansell, Mechanic, & Brondolo, 1986). This, on the one hand, reinforces the self-directed nature of CSM but only for self-exploration. On the other hand, lack of goal clarity and high career indecision observed, particularly amongst the ASH interview participants, suggests that higher likelihood of introspection may not necessarily enhance perceived employability, depending on availability of opportunities. Moreover, findings from the survey of 2009/2010 graduates and interview data suggested that amongst the components of CSM it was job search and guidance seeking that had the most strong influence on perceived employability, rather than self-exploration.

Findings in Chapter Seven suggested that work experience had an indirect effect on perceived employability via CSM. Interviews further showed that part of this effect was due to career indecision related to lack of CSM. Amongst the majority of interview participants who engaged in work placements and/or internships we observe this positive effect on employability via formation of career identity and an adaptation of goals to the structure of opportunities in the GLM. Work experience allows them an opportunity to observe the structure of jobs that are available to them and to clarify their preferences, and, hence, is instrumental in

shaping self-awareness. Internships/work placements also help in networking with the 'right' people in the industry and receiving career guidance from people who are knowledgeable in their area of work with regards to vacancies and job search. It can be argued that the role of adaptation comes into play when, based on this experience, graduates lower their expectations to a more realistic level (particularly in areas of work where career routes are less visible) and are, therefore, less likely to experience career indecision or be discouraged from GLM. In other words, as Participant 2 states "*... you just don't know these jobs unless you're directed and found the connection through industry.*" Hence, it can be argued that work placements also act as anticipatory socialisation in forming employability perceptions (Atfield, Purcell, & Hogarth, 2009; Garavan & Morley, 1997; Kelley-Patterson & George, 2001), particularly for those who lack this due to the generalist nature of their courses, as vicarious learning has been shown to affect one's self-beliefs positively, particularly when the task is novel (Bandura, 2001, 2006). This further strengthens the argument that at the start of careers, graduates' employability perceptions are formed indirectly by educational constraints via CSM and career indecision.

It could be argued that engagement in work experience/internships, in itself, demonstrates self-directedness in enhancing employability. Prior research has suggested that these work experiences are amongst the strategies employed by graduates to enhance their chances of securing better jobs (e.g., Bromnick et al., 2012). Hence, while it may be the case for some graduates, a minority of interview participants from working class families also pointed out that they

simply could not 'afford' to leave their part-time student work to engage in such activities. This suggests that internships and work experiences may actually indicate both self-directedness and opportunities in relation to CSM.

Findings from the survey of 2009/2010 graduates suggested a strong role for self-esteem on graduates' engagement in CSM and employability perceptions. Self-esteem was however only raised as having an effect on job transitions in later careers in the interviews. Lack of reference to self-esteem during early careers in the interviews may be explained in two ways. Firstly, an examination of the bivariate correlations in Table 6.2 suggests that self-esteem is higher amongst graduates from old universities ($r=.12$, $p<.05$), professional degree subjects ($r=.12$, $p<.05$) and those who engaged in work experience beyond term-time work ($r=.14$, $p<.05$). Secondly, findings in Chapter Seven suggest that part of the effect of self-esteem on perceived employability is mediated by CSM. As noted above, two of the three educational correlates of self-esteem (i.e., degree course and work experience) had a role in the extent to which graduates engage in CSM and develop better perception of employability in early careers. Hence, it could be that in the interviews the effect of self-esteem in early career outcomes may be disguised in their educational history and CSM and may differentiate graduates who experienced career indecision and discouragement from the GLM upon graduation. For instance, it could be speculated here that one participant (Participant 16; business graduate with a 2:1 degree classification and work experience beyond part-time student work during university) who, despite being rejected from his applications to graduate

traineeships, was not discouraged from the GLM due to high self-esteem, as self-esteem has been shown to be associated with resilience and increased effort when faced with setbacks (Korman, 1976).

Only a minority of interview participants were immediately discouraged from the GLM upon graduation. For these participants, degree classification and social background had an inhibitory role for on CSM and, therefore, perceived employability. This was due to a perception that they were excluded from high skilled job opportunities from the onset of graduate careers. For these interview participants who did not experience career indecision, it could be argued that perceived employability was perhaps directly related to human and social capital. This may be explained by the unobserved heterogeneity and the positional conflict perspectives to graduate underemployment. According to the unobserved heterogeneity perspective, graduates with lower knowledge, skills and abilities (as reflected in their lower degree classification in this case) are only able to secure either non-graduate or intermediate skilled jobs (Chevalier, 2000; Chevalier & Lindley, 2006). The finding that graduates with a 2:2 or lower degree classification perceive a barrier in access to 'good' jobs suggests that human capital, based on their educational history, has a role in engaging in CSM and enhancing perceived employability for these graduates, and, hence, likelihood of underemployment in the first job.

Discouragement from the GLM due to both degree classification and social background¹² may be explained by the 'relative' component of employability as argued by Brown and Hesketh (2004) from a positional conflict perspective. In other words, graduates who believe in the futility of engaging in CSM due to having a 2:2 or lower degree classification and/or lack of access to 'right' social and professional networks perceive their chances of securing high skilled work relative to others as rather poor due to their human and social capital. This may also be explained from a self-determination theory perspective, which, when applied to job transitions, suggests that the degree of control one perceives over the transition determines perceived ease of movement, and likely to result in subsequent movement (Forrier et al., 2009). In this sense, it can be argued that in the case of discouraged participants, a 2:2 or lower degree classification and/or working class background may affect perceived control they have over securing high skilled work, resulting in discouragement from the GLM.

There was also some discouragement amongst the interview participants, due to the amount of time and effort that goes into job search and applications for highly skilled job. In this case, taking up any available easy entry job due to immediate financial need was a common observation that came up across the 'wrong-foot' interview participants. This is in line with the unemployment

¹² It could be argued that both the online survey of 2009/2010 graduate sample and the interview group were skewed; the majority of participants were from families with at least one parent in highly skilled work and/or had a university degree. This, however, sadly reflects the extent of widening access in HE in the UK. It was reported that despite the rapid increase in participation of the students from disadvantaged backgrounds, only 20 per cent enter HE; while this ratio is more than forty per cent for those from advantaged backgrounds (Committee of Public Accounts, 2009).

research which suggests that financial need increases with duration of unemployment (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005; McKee-Ryan, Virick, Prussia, Harvey, & Lilly, 2009) and is associated with higher job search intensity (Van Hooft & Crossley, 2008), lower reservation wage (Bloemen & Stancanelli, 2001) and, hence, shorter duration of unemployment (Wanberg, 2012). This further suggests that CSM and employment outcomes for graduates is not necessarily self-directed but in the case of those who experienced immediate financial need upon graduation, the extent to which graduates engaged in CSM was externally regulated to a certain extent by their circumstances. From a theory of self-determination perspective these external circumstances have a controlling role on motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000) as goal-directedness and its outcomes are associated with the extent to which the individual is autonomous in pursuing these goals, i.e., has choice. From a positional conflict theory, it can be argued that in the case of these graduates who experienced immediate financial need, their ability to position themselves better in the GLM via CSM was constrained.

For a great majority of interview participants who experienced career indecision, this was accompanied by discouragement from the GLM due to not being able to secure work in large graduate employers. By limiting their job search and applications to these graduate traineeships, it can be argued that these graduates demonstrate poor adaptability to the opportunities in the GLM. The discouraged worker effect is defined as “the decision to refrain from job search as a result of poor chances on the labour market” (Van Ham et al., 2001,

p. 1733). Defined this way, it appears that for these graduates labour market chances reflect either employment in large graduate employers or that in 'easy entry' jobs. This reflects a lack of adaptability to the opportunities in the labour market, due to lack of CSM and career indecision, as graduate careers no longer only realise in traditional graduate employers (Purcell et al., 2002).

Despite prior research suggesting a role for university type (i.e., 'new' universities vs 'old' universities) for graduate employability (Chevalier & Conlon, 2003), this effect was not observed in the findings. This may be due to under-representation of new universities in both the survey of 2009/2010 graduates (25%) and in the graduate interviews (N=2).

Overall, these findings from the survey of 2009/2010 graduates and interview data provide support for the vocational psychology and the 'new' career research suggesting a direct link between CSM and employability. Nevertheless, the findings extend this literature by suggesting an indirect effect for educational and, to a lesser extent, social constraints on formation of employability perceptions. The effect of these constraints on perceived employability is not only reflected in differences in human and social capital components of employability, as argued by the unobserved heterogeneity and the positional conflict perspectives but also, more strongly, in the formation of career identity and adaptability, in particular related to degree subject and work experience. These findings correspond to the recent conceptual work on the determinants of graduate employability suggesting a focus on the process through which it is developed (Bridgstock, 2009; Holmes, 2001). This chapter

next discusses evidence in relation to self-directedness of employability development for those who experienced underemployment in the first job.

Determinants of career self-management and employability following early underemployment

Similar to the discussion of the self-directedness of CSM and employability upon graduation, career history analysis using interview data in Chapter Nine pointed that employability development following experience of early underemployment was associated with both the opportunities provided by the job/organisation and graduates' willingness to do so.

For most interview participants who started on the 'wrong-foot', particularly for those who took up work in areas relevant to their degree specialisation, we observe an indirect effect of opportunities provided by the job to engage in CSM and enhance employability. These jobs, despite being unchallenging and "*soul destroying*" (Participant 26) provide an opportunity to observe the different career options that are available in the world of work, which most of these participants were not aware of previously due to lack of CSM. Based on this observation and experience, graduates develop and adapt their career goals to the structure of availability of jobs. This experience in underemployment in a relevant area of work also allowed to network with the 'right' people to seek career advice and/or increase chances of better job search outcomes. In this sense, it can be argued that early underemployment has contributed to these participants' CSM and employability by passively demonstrating personal flexibility and optimising career goals to the availability of alternatives in the

GLM, two competencies that are argued to be important in employability development (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006). This description of how for some experience of low skilled work contributed to career identity and adaptability is very similar in content to that in relation to how work experience, in the form of internships and/or work placements, developed employability perceptions amongst participants at the time of graduation. Hence, it can be argued here that for some, initial experience of underemployment provides an opportunity for socialisation in to work and allows better positioning within the GLM by refining career goals (King, 2004) and job mobility preparedness, as reflected in increased job search and networking (Kossek et al., 1998) and, therefore, indirectly effects perceived employability.

Moreover, looking at the 'wrong-foot'-'right-track' participants' willingness to move, and, therefore, increased engagement in CSM, it may be argued that this is also due to the effects of breach of psychological contract (De Vos, De Stobbeleir, & Meganck, 2009; Inkson & King, 2011; Sturges et al., 2005), as the majority of these participants started their careers in these jobs with the expectation that this would act as a stepping stone to better jobs. This may be explained by the findings in Chapter Nine suggesting a differentiating role for intrinsic features of work, that lead to development through the job on job quality and employment-related outcomes for the underemployed, which is also in line with job design theories (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Karasek & Theorell, 1990; O'Brien, 1983; Oldham & Hackman, 2010; Wood, 2008). This further

strengthens the argument that lack of opportunities in the job indirectly influences perceived employability.

For a minority of 'wrong-foot' participants (i.e., those who were 'stuck' in underemployment) willingness to engage in CSM and enhance employability was negatively affected by both the lack of opportunities for development on the job and by the physical and psychological strain they felt from their work at the end of the day due to the repetitive and unchallenging nature of their jobs. This is consistent with prior research where job exhaustion was shown to be related to a dampened motivation to engage in career development (Feldman & Ng, 2008). Here we clearly observe the dampening role of lack of opportunities provided by the job/organisation on graduate employability.

There was little or no mention of professional development opportunities on the job by the 'wrong-foot' interview participants. Development of human capital for these graduates commonly took place via further degree qualifications, especially later in careers. It should be noted here that the majority of these graduates were working in the HR field, which is currently in the process of professionalization (Gold & Bratton, 2003; Gold, Rodgers, & Smith, 2003). Hence, entry into the profession increasingly requires certain qualifications (i.e., CIPD qualification) beyond a university degree. For these participants, therefore, mostly after some experience of administrative and/or intermediately skilled work, there was a realisation that to improve chances of employability engaging in postgraduate courses was a necessity. Nevertheless, lack of differences in the requirement of a postgraduate degree to get and do

the job found in this study suggests that this, again, points to yet another form of adaptation on the individual's side to the requirements of the GLM and to further credentialism rather than professionalism. Supporting this, graduates commonly report higher confidence in their ability to find jobs as a result of postgraduate qualifications.

Only in the case of interview participants who secured 'fast-track' positions in large organisations or in the government we observe organisational career management practices that help engage in CSM and enhance employability. Given that these participants were less likely to have experienced career indecision and/or discouragement from the GLM due to good CSM skills and higher perception of employability upon graduation, this finding is in line with the previous research which suggests that graduates who have good CSM skills receive more organisational support in career development (Sturges et al., 2005; Sturges & Guest, 2001), yet lack of such practices for graduates on the 'slow-track' suggests that, despite engaging in CSM, some graduates do not receive this support, and, therefore, individual responsibility gains more prominence in enhancing employability.

Looking at the effects of graduates' willingness to enhance employability for the 'wrong-foot' interview participants, a crucial role for self-esteem is observed. More specifically, two contrasting effects were observed. For most participants who started on the 'wrong-foot', experience of poor quality employment with little/no development opportunities and poor pay at the start of careers lowered self-esteem. For 'stuck' participants, this reaffirmed their initial poor

perceptions of employability, which, in turn, renders engagement in CSM to move out of their predicament rather futile as the duration of underemployment prolonged. As King (2004) notes, in the vocational psychology literature this is referred to as 'maladjustment' (Crites, 1969), where the individual experiences a loss of control over desired career outcomes and, hence, perceived difficulty in finding 'graduate' level work translates into 'learned helplessness' (Maier & Seligman, 1976; Seligman, 1972), as proposed in Feldman's (1996) seminal work on underemployment, and lower perceived employability for 'stuck' participants.

For interview participants who moved out of early underemployment, poor self-esteem due to underemployment was ameliorated with social comparisons to others who are in better work. In contrast to 'stuck' graduates, this heightened a need for CSM. While it is noted that this may result in a careerist orientation to work (Feldman & Weitz, 1991; McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011), this was not observed in the participants in this study, perhaps due to social desirability issues associated with the interview method (Richman, Kiesler, Weisband, & Drasgow, 1999). Nevertheless, those interview participants who moved out of underemployment had initially higher perceptions of employability in comparison to 'stuck' graduates, which may explain their higher resilience to experience of underemployment in career motivation and adaptability and the effect of prior employability perception on later development of employability.

It can be argued here that supporting the emphasis on self-directedness of CSM and employability by the 'new' career discourse and vocational psychology literature, individual responsibility via CSM has great importance in graduates' employability development following early underemployment. However, the findings suggest that individual responsibility has more prominence in employability development due to the lack of opportunities provided the jobs and organisations and due to the limited availability of 'good' graduate jobs in the GLM. The importance of self-directedness in enhancing employability is clearly observed in the case of 'stuck' graduates' employability.

Employability for what?: Definitional issues in graduate employability

Employability for what? Upon graduation from university

Findings from the graduate interviews suggest that upon graduation, employability for most graduates correspond to securing high skilled, traditional graduate employment. Yet, for most, this conception changes to alternative forms of employment in low and intermediate skilled segment of the GLM in the process of securing employment via adaptability to the realities of the GLM. This was most clearly observed amongst interview participants who applied to graduate trainee programmes due to career indecision and amongst those who engaged in internships and/or work placements and/or completed postgraduate degrees upon graduation. Looking at the actual employment outcomes for these graduates (see Appendix V), it can be argued that, in actuality, graduate employability (i.e., the capability to gain initial employment (Hillage & Pollard, 1998, p. 1) and "the individual's perception of his or her

possibilities of acquiring employment” (Berntson et al., 2008, p. 2)) largely corresponds to the three segments of the GLM identified in Chapter Eight, i.e., the high skilled, intermediate and non-graduate segments, as they find employment across these segment. Hence, the discussion of definitional aspects of employability presented in this section concentrates on employability for ‘what’ upon graduation from university and the role of adaptability in defining graduate employability.

Research on graduate employers’ recruitment and selection practices suggested that employment outcomes for graduates realise not only in traditional high skill work but also in lower skilled, non-graduate work. For instance, Mason (1996) reports that while managers selected some ‘suited’ applicants to high-level, traditional graduate jobs where they are provided with career opportunities, the ‘less suited’ graduate applicants were usually selected for routine, “poorly-paid clerical-grade” (p. 99). A comparable finding was reported by Purcell, Morley and Rowley (2002) where recruiters distinguished between professional/technical occupations, and general management, administration and service occupations. The former group of occupations consisted of ‘hard-to-fill’ jobs and a university degree was a requirement either because it was associated with specialist knowledge or was required by regulations. Recruitment into the general managerial, administrative and service occupations relied heavily on the use of competencies, with most employers admitting that these jobs do not actually require a university degree. Blenkinsopp and Scurry (2007) suggest that employers select graduates mainly

because (a) more jobs are now labelled as 'knowledge work' and thus appear to require a university degree (as in the case of emerging graduate occupations) or (b) they are not specifically looking for graduates but graduates appear to be the best of applicants for non-graduate jobs. The findings in this research help in understanding why some graduates become applicants for these non-graduate jobs. This is not only due to difficulty of entry into traditional graduate jobs, but also due to psychological processes of career indecision and discouragement from the GLM attributable to their social and educational background, which influence adaptability of expectations and career behaviour to these segments.

The finding that most interview participants who experienced career indecision had the conception that the next logical step was to apply for graduate trainee programmes suggests that graduates do form a sense of graduate 'identity' and employability that corresponds to traditional, high skilled graduate work, mostly based on expectations from their families and the advice received from careers services. Supporting this, findings from the survey of 2009/2010 graduates in Chapter Seven suggested guidance seeking was positively associated with perceived employability ($\beta=.15$, $p<.05$; Table 7.3). The interview data suggests that they expect, as a result of their participation in HE, a right of entry into the traditional graduate occupations, which is affirmed by those whose opinions they value yet disaffirmed by the realities of the GLM (Holmes, 2001, 2011). In this regard, these graduates seem to have internalised the skills policy rhetoric that a university education will lend itself to 'good'

jobs. In the process of career identity formation and development of employability particularly graduates who failed to achieve 1st or 2:1 degree classifications and/or those from working class families feel excluded from the GLM. This results in disillusionment in the alternatives they have and the value of a university education, and a difficulty in forming employability perceptions (Dwyer & Wyn, 2001) for 'graduate' level work. Hence, employment outcomes for these graduates largely reflect employability for non-graduate, low skilled work; evidenced in the finding that all, but one, participants who experienced career indecision and were rejected by graduate employers experienced discouragement from the GLM and took up any available, *easy entry* job.

In support of the research that suggests work experience is positively related to employment outcomes upon graduation (Mason et al., 2009), most interview participants who engaged in summer placements/internships in this study had secured what they perceive to be 'good' jobs upon graduation. In particular, this was influential in four participants' start to careers in graduate trainee schemes. For others, however, this led to an adaptation of their initial conception of 'graduate employability' to the realities of the GLM. This was reflected in the jobs they secured. While still perceiving these to be 'good' jobs for their careers at the time, graduates also admit that these were largely administrative/secretarial or associate professional occupations which served to show the ropes and/or, as discussed in Chapter Nine, acted as stepping stones to better jobs. This suggests, looking at both changes in perceived employability and actual employment outcomes at the start of careers for

interview participants who engaged in work placements and/or internships, employability is realised mostly in the intermediate segment of the GLM.

Eight out of the 37 interview participants have sought postgraduate degrees immediately after graduation to put them ahead of others in the competition for high skilled jobs and had developed favourable employability perceptions for traditional graduate occupations due to their increased human capital. Nevertheless, it was revealed in Chapter Eight that there were no significant differences across graduate occupations in the requirement of a postgraduate degree to get the job and that there was some disagreement regarding the necessity of this second degree to do the job. On the one hand, the finding that most interview participants who completed a second degree started their careers in what they perceive to be 'good' jobs in mostly intermediate skilled jobs suggests that postgraduate degrees for the most part are contributing further to the credentialism in the GLM (Bowman, 2005; Shah, Pell, & Brooke, 2004). On the other hand, graduates' engagement in postgraduate degrees to enhance chances of securing 'good' jobs suggests adaptability to this credentialism.

Not all interview participants who engaged in CSM were able to secure 'good' jobs upon graduation. For most of these graduates, we see the limitations of the GLM, either in the form of the effects of social/educational background or the availability and quality of jobs. Moreover, almost a quarter of interview participants secured what they perceived to be 'good' jobs for their career progression in administrative and/or associate professional occupations due to

a difficulty in securing high skilled work yet an unwillingness to succumb to low skilled jobs. This shows that rather than supply leading to demand in achieving the high skills vision (Wilson, 2008), the former more and more needs to adapt to the limitations of the latter. Hence, combining the discussion of definition of graduate employability with that of determinants of employability, it can be argued that employability for most graduates, rather than being a position (as argued by the proponents of the positional conflict view) or a possession (as argued by the unobserved heterogeneity thesis), largely reflects a process of developing not only human capital and social capital but also, more importantly, career identity and adaptability (Bridgstock, 2009; Holmes, 2011) , which is reflected in the changes observed in their perceived employability for securing the first job and the actual employment outcomes across the three segments of the GLM. This suggests that we are actually discussing different ‘shades’ of employability in relation to graduate employment corresponding to the three segments of graduate occupations and graduates’ formation of career goals and adaptation of these to the realities of the GLM.

Employability for what? Following early underemployment

Whereas for most graduates at the start of careers employability connoted ‘capability for securing high skilled work’, based on the findings on graduates’ movement out of underemployment and later career progression in Chapter Nine, it can be argued that following early underemployment the definition of employability for graduates, in perception and in actual employment outcomes, corresponds to securing employment that is better than non-graduate work.

This is best observed in 'wrong-foot' participants' movement out of early underemployment onto 'slow-track' careers, realising mostly in the intermediate segment of the GLM.

The findings suggested that perceived ease of movement out underemployment was the differentiating factor in job transitions out of underemployment between 'stuck' and 'wrong-foot'-'right-track' interview participants. Nevertheless, the finding that most of the latter moved on to associate professional or administrative/secretarial occupations suggests that it was a perceived ease of movement 'out of non-graduate work' rather than movement 'onto high skilled work' that they experienced. This is further supported by the lack of differences in perceived availability of alternatives (single item: "If you were looking for work today, how easy or difficult do you think it would be for you to find as good a job as your current one between occupations?") for graduates in 'emerging' occupations in comparison to those in traditional and non-graduate occupations in the analysis of the SS06 data. This suggests that there are no differences between underemployed graduates' (including those in 'emerging' occupations as well as non-graduate occupations) perception of securing a job similar to the current one with those in high skilled jobs. In other words, graduates in different occupational segments of the GLM develop similar perceptions of employability within the segment their careers realise. This may be observed in 'stuck' graduates' job transitions realising in the low skilled segment of the GLM while mobility for 'right-track' is largely confined to the intermediate segment.

Particularly for 'wrong-foot'-'slow-track' participants we observe more frequent job changes in career progression. From a 'new' career perspective, this may be likened to boundarylessness where the individual frequently changes jobs and organisations and seeks external validation of knowledge, skills and abilities to enhance employability (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), as observed in the case of knowledge workers (Tam et al., 2002). The findings in Chapter Nine, however, suggest that in most cases on the 'slow-track' (apart from those on the 'right-foot'-'slow-track') these frequent job transitions are involuntary, due to the temporary nature of the contracts participants held, hence, are not necessarily self-directed to enhance employability. From a 'new' career perspective, it could be argued that these job transitions may inadvertently contribute to employability in the next job. Nevertheless, the finding that 'slow-track' careers realise within the intermediate segment of the GLM further supports the argument that graduate employability is defined within the segment which one's career is realised.

Similar to the discussion of graduate employability at the start of careers, these findings suggest a need to question between employability for 'what' based on availability of opportunities in the GLM and graduates' adaptation of goals and expectations. This is somewhat different from the discussion of the role of adaptability in employability in the current literature. From a vocational psychology perspective, it is argued that "individuals adapt in an effort to better implement their self-concepts in their situations" (Savickas, 1997, p. 253). From an occupational/organisational psychology perspective, "employability

facilitates the identification and realization of job and career opportunities both within and between organizations. Conceived this way, employability is a disposition that captures individual characteristics that foster adaptive behaviours and positive employment outcomes” (Fugate, 2006, p. 20). In this perspective, adaptability is largely studied as a reaction to changing work/organisational demands (Bretz & Judge, 1994) or as indicating a proactive disposition on the part of the individual (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008) to secure ‘better’ outcomes. In the case of graduates who moved out of early underemployment, however, it can be argued that adaptability is to avoid ‘worse’ outcomes, which we observe in the case of ‘stuck’ graduates.

Overall, these findings suggests that the ‘new’ career discourse and vocational psychology research emphasising the importance of individual responsibility and self-directedness in CSM and employability are in neglect of the role of social, educational and occupational constraints within which graduate employability develops (Arnold & Cohen, 2008; Feldman & Ng, 2007; King et al., 2005; Rodrigues & Guest, 2010). Moreover, in defining graduate employability, these findings highlight a need to consider the segmentation in GLM and the role this plays in reference to employability. These findings, while suggesting a role for employability in employment outcomes in entry into and movement out of underemployment, also imply different shades of employability formed by adaptation to the different shades of opportunities in the segmented GLM. This chapter next examines career mobility and outcomes for graduates.

Career mobility and outcomes

Exploring career mobility for graduates, findings from Chapter Nine based on career history analysis from the interview data allowed a better understanding of the theoretical relationships between graduate employability and the role of social, educational and occupational constraints in graduates' entry into and movement out of underemployment and the spill-over effects of this early experience on later career mobility and outcomes. This suggested that graduate employability and its effect on job transitions while being necessarily self-directed were also largely dependent on the constraints within which graduates experience work. Largely corresponding to the segmentation in the occupational structure of the GLM, in graduates' career mobility following early underemployment we observe different career patterns, suggesting early underemployment limits later career mobility. Nevertheless, despite different career patterns, the interview data suggest little differences in well-being and career outcomes for graduates who moved out of underemployment and for those who started on the 'right-foot'. It is argued here that this further suggests adaptability to the realities of the GLM by the former.

Job transitions and career patterns

Examination of the case of 'stuck' interview participants represents the 'worst-case' scenario on any theoretical model of career mobility. On the individual side, we observe here that the initial lack of CSM and poor perceived employability persisted over time; and on the structural side, the low skilled occupations were inadequate in developing graduates' skills and providing any

kind of career direction, and were a hindrance to their career motivation due to job exhaustion. Supporting the entrapment hypothesis of career mobility following underemployment (Scherer, 2004) lack of development through the job and opportunities in the GLM (for the ASH graduates) resulted in being 'stuck' in the low skilled segment. In terms of career patterns and outcomes then, we observe movements within the lousy end of the labour market and disillusionment with opportunities and 'learned helplessness' on the part of the graduate, preventing any further attempts of moving out. It could be argued here from a 'new' career perspective that within similar labour market conditions it was only a minority of graduates who were 'stuck' and the majority moved out of early underemployment to 'right-track' careers, and hence the sole responsibility for 'stuck' participants' predicament lies with these graduates due to their initial lack of CSM. Nevertheless, the case of Participant 10 gives us reason to question this. Here we observe the effects of lack of clear career routes, the difficulties in entry into industry and the effects of the recent 2008 recession on the availability of jobs in this industry (Blair, 2001; Comunian, Faggian, & Li, 2010; Deuze, Elefante, & Steward, 2010; Leadbeater & Oakley, 2001; Oakley, 2006) as he did overcome the initial career indecision and discouragement via retraining and engaging in extensive CSM to position himself better in the GLM. Research on media and creative industry students also supported the view that development of employability, for the reasons cited above, was particularly difficult for these students (Ashton, 2011). A similar difficulty in the creative industries was observed, for instance, in Participant 8's career progression where she started as a box office clerk due to

the structure of opportunities in this industry. In her case, however, internal opportunities in the organisation provided a way out of early underemployment. This suggests that early underemployment may not be a temporary phenomenon in careers for some.

Looking at quality of transitions, 'wrong-foot' interview participants' movement out of early underemployment into mostly administrative and associate professional occupations is in line with the reports of upward mobility within the secondary segment of the labour market (operationalised as both intermediate and low skilled occupations) (Dekker et al., 2002; Purcell et al., 2010; Sanders & De Grip, 2004) . This provides further evidence for the entrapment hypothesis of career mobility following underemployment. As particularly observed amongst these graduates, career management largely occurred within the confines of available jobs with little or no support from the organisations. Again, based on this, from a 'new' career perspective, it can be argued that career development is largely at the initiative of the individual. Nevertheless, career histories of 'fast-track' graduates largely support the literature that career self-management is largely complemented by organisational career management initiatives and development through the job (Sturges et al., 2005; Sturges & Guest, 2001; Sturges et al., 2002). Moreover, this development through the job (Korpi & Tåhlin, 2009a, 2009b) (opportunities for which were found to be limited in 'emerging' occupations in comparison to those in traditional graduate occupations), particularly for the 'slow-track' interview participants appear to be of paramount importance, as it is the

experience gained through the job they use in securing the next job once their contract runs out. Given the boundaries of opportunities in the GLM by segmentation, this further reinforces the entrapment argument and suggests that graduate underemployment may be more pervasive and permanent than argued to be.

It is also with this group of participants (i.e., mostly 'wrong-foot'-'slow-track') we observe the higher likelihood of redundancies, pursuing postgraduate qualifications to improve position in the GLM, and more frequent job changes due to temporary contracts. While in appearance this resembles boundarylessness as described in the 'new' careers literature, in the great majority of these cases this actually reflects 'boundedness' of opportunities and transitions. This is similar to the distinction between 'boundaryless' and 'traditional' temporaries (Marler, Woodard Barringer, & Milkovich, 2002) or between 'voluntary' and 'involuntary' boundarylessness (Pang, 2003), where the latter generally do not have a preference for frequent job transitions and it may affect their human capital and objective career success negatively. These career patterns on the 'slow-track' appear to be more aligned with Raider and Burt's (1996) argument that employees do not choose or define their careers in traditional or new career terms but that it is imposed upon them by the constraints in the labour market.

There is, nevertheless, some evidence of a boundaryless mindset observed in this study. The cases of 'boundaryless' temporaries, however, were observed amongst the 'right-foot'-'slow-track' interview participants, where they either

aspired for careers that do not have a clear career route but requires accumulation of experience in different areas (e.g., Participant 2's career goals in politics) or they used their qualifications to guide their transitions to support their leisure activities (e.g., Participant 23). This suggests that while on the individuals' side it is important to be able to use the experience gained in the 'emerging' occupations to their advantage in their job search, on the structural side it is commonly the constraints in the GLM that push graduates for mobility.

For interview participants in the 'fast-track' we observe fewer transitions between jobs and organisations, and increasing responsibility and use of gradueness skills that make the difference between traditional and 'emerging' occupations. Yet, the boundaryless mindset described in the literature appears to hold true for these graduates, as reflected in their perceived employability and ease of movement, if required. They are willing to stay for their employing organisations as long as their psychological contract is satisfied and if/when broken they perceive no difficulty in moving on. Hence, satisfaction of the psychological contract results in lower willingness to move for these graduates. Contrary to the boundarylessness literature though, these graduates do not jump employers to increase their employability and success in the labour market. This resonates with the findings that suggest while paying lip-service to employability, graduates prefer organisational careers (King, 2003).

Career outcomes

The finding that underemployment negatively and severely affects well-being and career success for 'stuck' graduates provides support for the vocational and

organisational psychology research which suggests a role for 'maladjustment', disillusionment and 'learned helplessness' in career outcomes (Feldman, 1996; King, 2004; McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011). There was, however, little or no reference to issues of well-being and self-esteem for 'fast-track' graduates. By comparison, for those who moved out underemployment, regaining self-esteem in 'emerging' graduate occupations is what commonly contributes to their perceived career success which appears to be on a level with the 'right-foot'- 'right-track' graduates. Again, we observe the effects of self-directedness and the role of organisational support in the differences between the accounts of career satisfaction. While those who frequently move between jobs and organisations attribute this to their own achievements and in comparison to those who stay in underemployment, graduates on the 'fast-track' commonly refer to their satisfaction with their progress and the support they received from the organisations. The similarities in overall career satisfaction, as indicated by both the 2006 Skills Survey and interview data, yet differences in the content of satisfaction suggest that adaptability to the GLM serves as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Constantine, Erickson, Banks, & Timberlake, 1998) for 'wrong-foot'- 'slow-track' graduates, where they maintain positive self-concept by reference to perceived achievement in moving out of early underemployment and in comparison to others who are stuck in low skilled work. This echoes the career success (Heslin, 2005) and perceived underemployment (Feldman et al., 1997) research which increasingly suggest a role for referent others. It can be argued that this adaptation is reflected in the differences in the conception of graduate employability discussed earlier. It was

noted that while at the start most graduates had the idea of a 'traditional' graduate job for employment options, with experience in the GLM and particularly by developing career identity and adaptability to the realities of the GLM this conception was changes to alternative forms of employment. Hence, lack of differences on career satisfaction and well-being despite differences in job quality may suggest that graduates internalise the conditions of the labour market segment that they are in and adapt their goals and expectations accordingly.

Overall, these findings suggest limited evidence of boundarylessness, for a group of highly skilled workers who are taken for granted to be the key players in the so-called knowledge economy and to navigate the labour market based on motivation and self-directedness. A more appropriate explanation of these findings is one of adaptation and its role in graduate career development, success and well-being despite different patterns of careers in different segments of the GLM. This suggests that the policy focus on the demand side of the GLM is now long overdue resulting in a segmented labour market which is less likely to contribute to economic and social prosperity as it tends to keep the status quo in its delivery, yet with higher skilled workers.

Implications for policy and practice

Findings from this research on understanding contemporary graduate careers suggest that employment- and career-related outcomes for graduates are largely dependent on the extent to which graduates are willing *and* able to enhance employability via CSM. CSM and employability development, and how

employability translates into actual employment outcomes and career progression, however, were found to be materialised within the boundaries of the GLM. These findings raise practical implications for policy development, graduate employers, HE institutions and graduates.

The segmentation observed in this research with regards to the occupational structure of the GLM, which has also been shown to affect definition of graduate employability and patterns of career development, call for more stringent demand side policies and a focus away from equating employability with human capital on the supply side. In achieving the 'high skills, high wages' vision, the Department for Education and Skills' (DfES, 2003a) report *21st Century Skills: Realising our Potential* states: "We must raise ambition in the demand for skills. We will only achieve increased productivity and competitiveness if more employers and more employees are encouraged and supported to make the necessary investment in skills" (p.9). In translating this vision to actuality, however, the pressure has been put on the supply side practices, on universities and graduates, and a liberalisation was observed on the demand side practices (Smith & Morton, 2006). Hence, it appears, while the 'high skills' vision was largely realised in the UK that of 'high wages' lags behind.

Despite increasing skills, nevertheless, productivity in the UK has stayed rather stable over the last few decades, until it slowed down with the recent economic recession. It could be argued, in light of the findings from this research, that this is partly due to the gradueness skills not being put into efficient practice by employers, through lack of "investment, innovation and more skill-intensive

product market strategies” (Keep, Mayhew, & Payne, 2006, p. 546). In other words:

the UK policy literature on skills runs the danger of deploying perceived deficiencies in workforce skills as the latest iteration of a long-standing ‘British labour problem’ thesis, whereby poor economic performance (however defined) is depicted as being in large measure due to the weaknesses inherent in the labour force and its skills, rather than in how workers are being motivated and deployed (Keep et al., 2006, p. 545).

However, the dangers of a ‘low-road’ approach which does not fully utilise workforce skills are clear in the present results as reflected in graduate employability and career mobility (Coates, 2000; Keep & Mayhew, 2010; UKCES,2010) materialising not only in ‘high skilled’ but also in lower skilled segments.

A decade ago the UK’s Cabinet Office for Performance and Innovation forecast: ‘In 2010, the UK will be a society where Government, employers and individuals actively engage in skills development to deliver sustainable economic success for all’ (PIU, 2002). Disappointingly, skills policies have largely neglected skills demand and usage (e.g., DfES, 2003a), although there are signs of change in emphasis (Scottish Government, 2007). As noted in Chapter Three, there is now great pressure on HE institutions to equip students with graduateness skills. To this end, supply side research highlights a need for partnerships between universities and employers to enhance graduates’ employability skills (CBI, 2009). In contrast to the initial assumptions that supply of a skilled workforce

will drive demand and productivity (Wilson, 2008), though, this commonly recommends that university curricula to be re-organised around employer needs and work experience embedded in the HE experience. Given the limited evidence for 'upskilling' and the finding that employability skills highlighted by skills policies still differentiating 'emerging' and professional occupations, satisfying employer demands via HE is likely to result in lower quality education for some, contributing to further unobserved heterogeneity in the GLM. Newer degree courses (e.g., sport and exercise science), which were referred to as the 'Mickey Mouse' courses by the Government itself (BBC, 2003), for instance, are generally positioned towards niche occupations providing a highly occupation-specific experience, but narrow scope of knowledge and skills (Chillas, 2010).

There was evidence in this research that upon graduation from university, graduates who engaged in work experience beyond part-time work were more likely to secure 'good' jobs. There was, however, a distinction here. Only four graduates who completed internships in large graduate employers were offered traditional graduate positions, while the rest secured what they perceived to be 'good' jobs in getting their careers started, in mostly administrative and associate professional occupations. In the case of the latter, an adaptation to the realities of the GLM was observed, where graduates formed preferences in accordance with the opportunities available in the GLM and their career development occurs largely within the confines of the intermediate segment of the GLM. The result is a two-tier education system where graduates from

established universities and degree course form the higher end of the labour market and others the re-trainable workforce (Boden & Nedeva, 2010). To further this argument, these findings suggest three segments of GLM where those within the lower/less valuable tier of HE are stuck either in the lousy or the intermediate segments depending on their adaptability.

The effects of increasing liberalisation on the demand side are apparent in this study with regards to differences in job quality in the different segments of the GLM and, hence, in diverse employment practices, and graduates' struggle in developing employability, securing 'graduate' level work and entrapment in low and intermediate segments of the GLM. The impact of job quality on job transitions, attitudes and well-being shows the importance of adapting organisational practices to the highly skilled workforce, for instance through job redesign, appropriate skill utilisation and opportunities for development (Hall & Las Heras, 2010). In contrast, these results suggest that this adaptation is largely expected on the HE institutions' and graduates' part, as employers seem reluctant to embrace job redesign or employability discourse recommendations (Baruch, 2001), feeling little pressure to change the status quo (Guest, 2001), despite the links between job design/HRM practices and firm performance (Guest, 2002). This is clearly observed in this study in the importance of work skills and intrinsic feature of work that make the difference between traditional and 'emerging' graduate occupations. As argued by Brown et al., (2011) employer practices is not consistent with the policy makers' high skills vision.

These findings suggest a role not only for job redesign/creation, but also formal and informal organisational support in graduate career development. Appreciation of these practices is observed in 'fast-track' interview participants' accounts of career success and reference to help by their organisations. In particular, with work becoming more demanding and team-work oriented, these findings highlight a responsibility for managers in active support and engagement in graduate development.

These findings lead us to question the purpose of universities in the so-called knowledge economy. The increasing policy focus on the supply side suggests that universities have a great responsibility for nation's economic and social prosperity, to such an extent that part of their funding is now based on graduate employability. Whereas traditionally universities were rather independent from government intervention while still being relevant for economic development (Sanderson, 1972); today they are more and more under pressure from the government in what they do and how they do it (Nedeva & Boden, 2006). Rather ironically, in the so-called 'knowledge economy', universities' historic purpose of stimulating intellectual thought and development appears inadequate. The emphasis for university-employer partnerships where graduates' develop 'work-readiness' suggests that the HE has become a means to an end, i.e., securing employment, rather than an end in itself (Collini, 2012). When considering the evidence of little upskilling in the GLM, it can be speculated that these partnerships further contribute to graduates being compensated for the lack of intermediately skilled labour force (Mason, 2002),

rather than contributing to a 'knowledge-economy'. Mason (2000) points out that because part of the costs of education on intermediate skilled workers fall on the employers while that of graduates generally do not particularly if they are 'work-readied' in HE, employers find it more profitable to employ graduates in these occupations. Moreover, he reports that the majority of employers failed to find any significant performance increases as a result this substitution. Based on this, it can be argued that without an 'upskilling' of the 'emerging' occupations, these kinds of partnerships where the content and delivery of HE are driven by employers will result in further segmentation of the GLM.

In rethinking the role of universities, within this context, graduates become the 'customers' of this increasingly marketised HE. Hence, Molesworth, Nixon, and Scullion (2009) differentiate between a 'being' orientation and a 'having' orientation within HE, where for the former HE is an end in itself, while for the latter, which is increasing in numbers, it is an entitlement for better work. This suggests, and as observed in discouraged interview participants' career histories here, university education today is perceived as an entry ticket for work. Furthermore, supporting the positional conflict view, the prevalence for completing postgraduate degrees or retraining in different areas of work appear to be contributing to the credentialism in the GLM (Brown, 2003) in the face of limited availability of 'graduate' jobs.

Based on these reasons, it is rather difficult to recommend partnerships between universities and employers where the content and delivery of HE is based on the needs of the latter. The findings in this research, however, suggest

that graduates commonly lack career clarity and an understanding of their options. As particularly noted by interview participants who experienced career indecision, there is still great emphasis by careers services in directing students for traditional graduate employers. Despite variation in perceptions on career service availability and effectiveness, some degree of student dissatisfaction with regards to careers services' help in development of career competencies was reported (Rowley & Purcell, 2001), particularly in 'self-awareness' and 'opportunity awareness' (Stewart & Knowles, 1999, 2000). Nevertheless, unless more attention is paid to the largely liberalised employer practices, this increasing awareness, at best, will only result in more graduates finding work in emerging occupations upon graduation perhaps rather than starting in low skilled work. Moreover, in the worst-case scenario, this may 'normalise' employment in 'emerging' occupations even further or may back-fire on student enrolment in HE.

The findings from this research highlight a role for individual responsibility and initiative to negotiate the constraints in employability development, access to jobs and developing careers. Yet, pervasiveness of career indecision due to lack of CSM was observed upon graduation. The findings from this research call for more extensive CSM on the part of the graduates, perhaps starting prior to graduation. Given the limited availability of high skilled jobs, this may still not be sufficient to prevent early underemployment, yet by developing an understanding of the GLM and forming career goals that match the opportunities, those graduates who are more likely to start in non-graduate

occupations may, at least, start in 'emerging' occupations. This requires widened exploration and job search, particularly for those from non-professional degree courses, including multiple sources. The role of developing adaptability on 'more favourable' employment outcomes upon graduation was recently supported by research (Koen et al., 2012).

Overall, then in terms of practice and policy related implications, the findings from this research call for longer-term strategies which incorporate skills policies into a wider economic and social development agenda (Payne, 2008), where the responsibility is shared between students, graduates, universities, employers, trade unions, sector or industry bodies and the government (Payne & Keep, 2003).

Contributions

In understanding the contemporary graduate careers this research makes a number of contributions to theory and literature. Conceptually, this research brings different but related strands of literature together to a study of graduate careers (e.g., job quality, employability and underemployment). The findings from this research suggest intricate relationships between career self-management, perceived employability, social and educational background, availability of opportunities in the GLM, career indecision, discouragement from the graduate labour market, willingness to move and perceived ease of movement in effecting career development and outcomes for graduates. These findings inform a number of research areas including the sociological and economics perspectives to graduate employability and underemployment,

vocational and organisational psychology research on new entrants into the labour market, the unemployed and on graduate underemployment, turnover literature and self determination theory, and career mobility. Using Forrier et al. (2009) conceptual framework on career mobility allowed this research to flexibly incorporate these different perspectives to graduate underemployment in one parsimonious model.

Another notable contribution concerns the study of graduate employability. In examining why some graduates, based on social and educational background, are more likely to be underemployed current explanations based on unobserved heterogeneity and positional conflict to graduate employability received plenty of support from the literature. Nevertheless, the implications of these perspectives to graduate employability limit the extent of intervention. Based on a recent interest in taking a process view to employability (Bridgstock, 2009; Forrier & Sels, 2003), this research examined determinants of employability development in early to mid-careers taking into consideration graduates' willingness *and* opportunities to enhance employability. This informs the 'new' career discourse and the skills policy in the UK on self-directedness of employability and calls for a more constraint-friendly approach to graduate career development.

The findings from this research also contribute to an understanding of what graduate employability refers for in the UK GLM. In the 'so-called' knowledge economy, graduate employability concerns less with knowledge, skills and abilities and more with adaptability to the opportunities in the labour market.

Hence, this suggested that adaptability of career thoughts and behaviour to the segmentation of opportunities plays a key role in defining employability and highlights that in discussing graduate employability an important question to ask is 'employability for what?'. This also has implications for skills policies in the UK which equate graduate employability as employment status six months after graduation. In light of the discussion of definition of graduate employment here, this is less likely to be a meaningful indicator of employability.

In understanding the boundaries of graduate careers, this research expands the focus on graduate employment to 'emerging' graduate occupations and questions the extent of 'upskilling' to accommodate the highly skilled workforce in the GLM and, hence, the boundaries of opportunities. This contributes to a definition of 'good' graduate jobs by highlighting the role of intrinsic features of work that lead to employee development through work. Related to this, it also contributes to the research on the pervasiveness and temporality of underemployment by demonstrating that 'emerging' occupations are inferior to traditional, high skilled, occupations. The segmentation observed in the quality of opportunities available in the GLM and in fragmented graduate career patterns in this research further suggests an overemphasis of individual responsibility in securing employment and developing careers, and an underemphasis on the 'high wages' part of the knowledge economy vision. This further questions the very assumption on which the 'new' career literature was founded.

Despite being treated as a transitional phase in graduate careers, graduate underemployment has received little or no attention from a transition perspective. This research studies graduate underemployment from a 'job transition' approach. By systematically examining determinants of employability and the structure of opportunities before exploring graduates' movement into and out of low skilled work and discusses the role of employability on graduate underemployment from a constraint-friendly perspective. In this regard, this study examines graduate employment outcomes from a worker-centred perspective (Tomlinson, 2007; Weiss & Rupp, 2011) rather than treating graduates in universalistic terms, yet provides a bridge from the former to the latter (Inkson et al., 2012; Inkson & King, 2011). This contributes to our understanding of different career patterns that emerge in the so-called knowledge economy (Baruch & Bozionelos, 2010) and provides little support for the 'boundaryless career' for a group of highly skilled workers who start their careers in traditionally non-graduate occupations.

In understanding graduate employability as a process, this research first examines the statistical relationships between employability, CSM and its determinants; then uses the graduate career histories to clarify these relationships as they develop in time. Moreover, in its measurement of employment outcomes for graduates, it takes a multi-disciplinary perspective to job quality and underemployment. Statistically, this controls for the indicators of effects of unobserved heterogeneity and the positional conflict, and includes not only wages as commonly used by economists and policy makers but also

intrinsic aspects of work. Moreover, by examining career histories and analysing the outcomes of transitions as experienced by the graduates, this study uses both objective and subjective indicators of job quality and underemployment. This was identified to be particularly problematic in the CSM research, as this commonly uses various proxies, e.g., number of job offers and employment status, to determine the outcomes of engaging in CSM.

Chapter conclusions

This research highlights some of the misleading assumptions and predictions with regards to graduate self-directedness of graduate employability, the 'boundarylessness' of opportunities in the GLM, the role of employability on employment outcomes, the pervasiveness and temporality of underemployment and the patterns of graduate careers and outcomes. Crucially, the findings from this research suggest that (i) graduate employability is determined by both willingness and opportunities to engage in CSM; (ii) opportunities for development are largely bounded in the traditional segment of the GLM and not necessarily available in the intermediate segment, where most graduates either start their careers or move on to following underemployment in low skilled work; (iii) employability and career mobility for graduates is associated with formation and adaptation of career goals to this segmented GLM; (iv) new career patterns for graduates exist in the intermediate segment of the GLM; and (v) if persistent, early underemployment affects career outcomes. Overall, this indicates a more segmented GLM negotiated via CSM and fragmented careers for graduates.

This research has implications for policy and research on graduate employability, which treats employability either as a possession or a position, by highlighting that formation of career identity and adaptability are of great importance for graduate employability in today's knowledge economy. Moreover, this research highlights that due to the segmented nature of the GLM, employability for 'what' needs to be clarified in discussing employment outcomes. For instance, based on skills policy discourse and its pressures on HE institutions all participants in the interview sample (apart from Participant 37) would be a 'tick in the box' as they initially secured employment within six months of graduation. Yet, less than half of these participants secured what they perceived as 'good' jobs. This research shows that contrary to the policy assumptions, employability is not the same for all graduates from all HE institutions of all degree courses. Moreover, from a theoretical perspective, enhancing employability was found to be not only dependent on individual factors but also on opportunities for engaging in CSM. This suggests a boundedness rather than boundarylessness.

This research further questions the boundarylessness of opportunities via a systematic examination of the availability and quality of today's graduate occupations. This contributes to the 'upskilling' debate concerning the opportunities in the GLM. It appears there is some 'upskilling', largely attributable to the changing nature of work, yet 'emerging' graduate occupations still lag behind professional occupations. Moreover, graduates' career mobility in 'emerging' graduate occupations also lag behind those in

professional occupations, due to lack of development through work and organisational career management. This highlights a need for more stringent demand side policies and suggests that in achieving the 'high skills, high wages' vision, universities and graduates to a large extent kept their promise on the former yet employers did not on the latter. This calls for more active communication and collaboration between the parties involved in creating the 'high skills, high wages' vision. Theoretically, this questions the very assumption on which the 'new' career discourse was built and reinforces the call for research that brings boundaries back into careers (Inkson et al., 2012).

By examining career mobility for a group of workers who are assumed to be the pillars of the so-called knowledge economy, this research fills part of the gap in understanding contemporary careers. There is evidence from the 'lousy' part of the labour market that low skilled workers are largely bounded by the opportunities in this lower segment (Toynbee, 2003). On the other hand, there is also evidence from an elite group of knowledge workers who navigate the labour market using their niche skills to increase their employability and success in the labour market (Tam et al., 2002). This research brings together the two polars of the labour market in its examination of the highly skills workers in low skilled work.

In its examination of the contemporary graduate careers, this research took a person-centred yet bounded perspective to graduate career mobility starting with university-to-work transitions and extending onto mid-careers. This suggests increasing greyness in the GLM on graduate employability, availability

of opportunities and development; and a 'survival of the fittest/most adaptable' in terms of career outcomes. In conclusion, this research highlights an overemphasis on the skills policies and the 'new' career discourse on individual responsibility for securing employment and developing careers. Ironically, it also concludes that individual responsibility, self-directedness and adaptability are increasingly important in contemporary graduate careers. Nevertheless, it argues, this is due to the bounded nature of the GLM and not to the limitlessness of opportunities as assumed. It highlights a need for more intervention at the demand-side to absorb the highly skilled workforce and on the supply-side it points to a need for more realistic career advice for career competency development with which graduates seem to struggle.

Chapter Eleven

11. CONCLUSION

Understanding contemporary graduate careers

Based on an assumption of boundaryless opportunities in the so-called knowledge economy, skills policies in the UK and the 'new' career discourse emphasise the role of self-directedness in enhancing employability, securing employment and developing careers. Yet, increasing, and to some extent persistent, accounts of graduate underemployment in the UK were reported. Based on this evidence, this research aimed to understand contemporary graduate careers and examined (i) the factors associated with enhancing graduate employability and the extent to which this reflects self-directedness; and (ii) the occupational boundaries of the GLM in order to determine the boundarylessness of opportunities; and treating graduate underemployment from a job transition perspective, explored (iii) graduates' entry into and movement out of early underemployment and the spill-over effects of this experience on later career mobility and outcomes. A mixed methods design was used, comprising of a survey of 2009/2010 graduates, the 2006 Skills Survey and semi-structured, in-depth graduate interviews.

In examining the factors associated with graduate employability and the extent to which this reflects self-directedness, findings from the survey of 2009/2010

graduates and graduate interviews showed that graduate employability was determined by both willingness *and* opportunities to engage in CSM. This suggested that graduate employability was formed as a process of engaging in CSM which was determined not only self-directedness by but also by the structure of opportunities in the GLM. Moreover, in the development of employability perceptions an adaptation of expectations to the availability of opportunities in the GLM was observed.

Evidence of 'upskilling' in intermediate skilled, 'emerging' occupations to accommodate this highly skilled workforce was limited in this study. Findings from the 2006 Skills Survey and the graduate interview data suggest that 'emerging' graduate occupations form an intermediate segment in the GLM, differentiated from the traditional, 'lovely', and the non-graduate, 'lousy' segment by job quality and employment-related outcomes. More crucially, for this research, these differences between segments in the GLM were largely attributable to intrinsic work characteristics that lead to development through work, suggesting limited evidence of boundarylessness.

Graduates' entry into and movement out of underemployment in the graduate interviews was found to be related to both perceived employability, via CSM, and the availability of jobs in the GLM. Particularly, the quality of transitions out of underemployment and later career patterns suggested that for most, this resulted in movement into and entrapment in the intermediate segment of the GLM. This questions the skill policy and the 'new' career emphasis on the role of employability on employment and career outcomes. The finding that, despite

the evidence showing inferior job quality in 'emerging' occupations in comparison to traditional graduate occupations, within 10 years of employment there were no differences on career outcomes for graduates, apart from those who were 'stuck' in underemployment, further suggests graduates' adaptation of expectations to the realities of the GLM.

Limitations and future research

There were a number of limitations to this research that need mentioned. The first limitation concerns the difficulties in sampling of the online survey, largely attributable to the upcoming Graduate Destinations surveys and universities' reluctance to announce this survey with fear of survey fatigue amongst their graduates. The analysis controlled for variance due to sampling (e.g., how they heard about the survey, university region). Nevertheless, future research should aim to find better sampling strategies via collaborations with universities or the HESA for a more timely data collection and representative sample.

The second limitation concerns the use of secondary data (2006 Skills Survey) and measurement issues. For instance, the findings highlighted the importance of a multidimensional operationalisation of job quality, however, using secondary data, this analysis relied on proxies for job content and skills measures. Even though the findings are replicable and largely supported by interview data, better measures of job quality that incorporate multiple facets would increase reliability and validity. This limitation is evident in particular in relation to the 'skill utilisation' and 'opportunity for skill use' variables, both of which are single item measures. The former is taken in this study to reflect

perceived skill utilisation, following Green and colleagues' (e.g., Green & Zhu, 2010) use of the variable, while the latter is taken to reflect the 'opportunities' provided by the job in a more developmental sense (e.g., Warr, 1987). Given the relatively low intercorrelation between these two variables ($r=0.23$, $p<.05$, Table 6.4), it may be the case that respondents also are making a distinction between the two. In fact, a distinction was observed in the interview sample in how they referred to skill utilisation on the job and the opportunities provided by the job. Nevertheless, future surveys should make better use of established and validated scales rather than relying on single items (e.g., Arnold, 1994; O'Brien, 1983).

A third limitation in this research was the restriction applied on the SS06 sample in terms of work experience (3–10 years). This was aimed to identify the boundaries in the GLM for those who are argued to move out of early underemployment (Purcell & Elias, 2004) and also to match this with the data from the interviews. Hence, the purpose was to provide a descriptive contrast between 'emerging' and traditional occupations to inform the 'upskilling' debate and demand-side policies. However, panel data using the next Skills Survey would provide a better understanding of the direction of change in 'emerging' occupations.

Its use retrospective career histories may also be cited as a fourth limitation of this research. This method to study contemporary graduate careers helps understand graduates' experience of the GLM, and drivers and outcomes of job transitions better (Thomson et al., 2002). Particularly, this provides insight into

the nature and consequences of underemployment for graduates, which has commonly been treated in dichotomous/categorical terms particularly by economists and policy makers (e.g., Green & Zhu, 2010). Nevertheless, it could be argued that the use of retrospective data in the interviews may raise concerns on validity as it introduces not only social desirability bias (Richman et al., 1999) due to the one to one nature of interviews but also memory bias (Manzoni et al., 2010). Future research may seek alternative strategies to studying graduates' movement into and out of underemployment and the effect of this early experience on later career outcomes. One such possible alternative is the use of diary studies to follow up graduates' progression following graduation from university.

One important finding from this research was that, for most graduates, careers materialise within the intermediate or low skilled segment of the GLM. Future research may expand this understanding by concentrating on certain areas of work, particularly those in the process of professionalization, in understanding how contemporary graduate careers shape. There is already some evidence from graduates of the so-called 'Mickey Mouse' courses (i.e., newly introduced degree courses from the new universities in the UK that are argued to be of little relevance in the labour market) that these careers largely realise within the intermediate segment of the GLM (Chillas, 2010). Moreover, with growing emphasis on university-employer collaborations an examination of career mobility for graduates who were exposed to these partnerships either via work experience or via redesigned curricula would be fruitful in determining the

effects of these initiatives which are argued to be likely to result for the worse in this thesis. The findings in this study while highlighting some degree of 'upskilling' in 'emerging' occupations, also point to a growing similarity with managerial occupations. With many of these managerial occupations traditionally requiring work experience and not necessarily a university degree, in today's GLM these may also be identified as 'emerging' graduate occupations. Future research would benefit from an examination of the changing nature of managerial graduate occupations.

Conclusion

In answering its overarching research question in understanding contemporary graduate careers (i.e., 'what is the role of self-directedness in graduate employability, underemployment and career development?') this research concludes that graduate employability, securing 'graduate' level employment and successful career development largely depends on self-directedness, as reflected in graduate adaptability. Crucially, however, it concludes that self-directedness and adaptability have great importance in contemporary graduate careers due to the *boundaries* of the GLM and not due to the limitlessness of opportunities, as assumed by the skills policy in the UK and the 'new' career discourse. On the practical side, this research calls for long-term skills policies where responsibility for 'high skills, high wages' is shared between the government, employers, universities and graduates. Theoretically, the most important contribution of this research is its treatment of graduate underemployment from a job transition perspective and use of a constraint-

friendly approach, which allows incorporating voluntaristic (e.g., 'new' career perspective) and deterministic perspectives (e.g., entrapment hypothesis) from different theoretical disciplines, to career mobility and, thereby, creating a bridge from the former to the latter in understanding contemporary graduate careers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Survey of 2009/2010 graduates



CONTEMPORARY GRADUATE CAREERS STUDY:

CLASS OF '09

Dear participant,

I am a PhD student in the Department of Human Resource Management at the University of Strathclyde. You are invited to participate in a research study on contemporary graduate careers. This involves a short survey on your career thoughts. It takes approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Why are contemporary graduate careers important?

Today there are many more graduates in the labour market compared to few decades ago, mainly due to the expansion of higher education. One consequence of this is that the graduate labour market is far more diverse. Now that you have successfully finished your undergraduate studies and are about to begin your graduate careers, your thoughts and perceptions on your OWN career provides invaluable information to this research project.

What will be involved if you participate?

Your personal data will be processed completely anonymously and in strict confidentiality.

Each survey will be stored electronically.

Participants will be given individual codes and names of individual respondents will not be asked or stored.

The study will be performed following all academic and ethical guidelines.

Your participation in the research is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the survey at any point without giving a reason.

How to participate?

- ✓ Please read the instructions carefully before filling in the survey.
- ✓ Please respond to each question as openly and honestly as you can. There are no right or wrong answers.
- ✓ It is very important that you answer every question. Please try to complete the whole questionnaire.

If you wish to receive a short report summarising the results of this study or should you have any questions please contact:

Belgin Okay

Department of Human Resource Management, University of Strathclyde, 50 Richmond Street Glasgow, G1 1XU, T: +44(0)141 548 3973, E: belgin.okay@strath.ac.uk

Your help is very much appreciated.

SECTION 1

This first section is about what you are currently doing with regards to your career after having left university.

1. Now that you have just graduated from university, what is your plan for the immediate future (for the next year)? (please select as appropriate)

- Start work life
 Start a postgraduate course
 Take a gap year
 I don't know yet
 Other (please specify) _____

2. Are you currently making job applications?

Yes No (if No, please proceed to Question 6)

3. Which of the following sectors are you making your job applications in? (please select as appropriate)

- Private sector (e.g., a company)
 Public sector (e.g., local or national government, schools or the health service)
 Non-profit organisations (e.g., charity organisations)

4. Most of the job advertisements state the required level of qualification and specification. To what extent are you applying for jobs that require your specific university degree?

In general, most of the jobs I apply to

- ... specifically require my degree subject.
 ... require any university degree.
 ... do not require a university degree.

5. Below are some of the things people look for in a job. In your job search, which one(s) are you particularly looking for? (please select as appropriate)

- Good promotion prospects
 Good pay
 Good relations with your supervisor or manager
 A secure job
 A job where you can use your initiative
 Work you like doing
 Convenient hours of work
 Choice in your hours of work
 The opportunity to use your abilities

- Good fringe benefits
- An easy work load
- Good training provision
- Good physical working conditions
- A lot of variety in the type of work
- Friendly people to work with
- Good location
- Other (please state) _____

6. Have you already been offered a position in an organisation?

Yes No (if No, please proceed to Question 10)

7. Did you accept the job offer?

Yes No (if Yes, please proceed to Question 8, if No, please proceed to Question 9)

8. Please indicate your reasons for accepting the job offer (please tick as appropriate)

- Good promotion prospects
- Good pay
- Good relations with your supervisor or manager
- A secure job
- A job where you can use your initiative
- Work you like doing
- Convenient hours of work
- Choice in your hours of work
- The opportunity to use your abilities
- Good fringe benefits
- An easy work load
- Good training provision
- Good physical working conditions
- A lot of variety in the type of work
- Friendly people to work with
- Good location
- Other (please state) _____

9. Please indicate your reasons for rejecting the job offer (please tick as appropriate)

- Poor promotion prospects
- Poor pay
- Poor relations with your supervisor or manager
- An insecure job
- A job where you cannot use your initiative
- Work you don't like doing
- Inconvenient hours of work

- ___ No choice in your hours of work
- ___ No opportunity to use your abilities
- ___ Poor fringe benefits
- ___ An difficult work load
- ___ Poor training provision
- ___ Poor physical working conditions
- ___ No variety in the type of work
- ___ Not friendly people to work with
- ___ Poor location
- ___ Other (please state) _____

10. Did you apply for postgraduate studies for the 2009 – 2010 academic year?

Yes___ No___ (if No, please proceed to Section 2)

11. What are your reasons for applying for postgraduate studies?

SECTION 2

The statements below refer to tasks individuals may engage in when exploring their career opportunities. Thinking over the last few months, please indicate how much you have engaged in these activities.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Moderately	Frequently	Very frequently

To what extent have you behaved in the following ways over the last few months?

1 Investigated career possibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
2 Went to various career orientation programs.	1	2	3	4	5
3 Obtained information on specific jobs or companies.	1	2	3	4	5
4 Initiated conversations with knowledgeable individuals in my career area.	1	2	3	4	5
5 Obtained information on the labour market and general job opportunities in my career area.	1	2	3	4	5
6 Sought information on specific areas of career interest.	1	2	3	4	5

Some people may also engage in self-exploration when exploring their career opportunities. Self-exploration refers to thinking about your past experiences. Thinking over the last few months, please indicate how much you have engaged in the self-exploration activities listed below...

To what extent have you behaved in the following ways over the last few months?

7	Reflected on how my past integrates with my future career.	1	2	3	4	5
8	Focused my thoughts on me as a person.	1	2	3	4	5
9	Contemplated my past.	1	2	3	4	5
10	Been retrospective in thinking about my career.	1	2	3	4	5
11	Understood a new relevance of past behaviour for my future career.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION 3

The following statements refer to certain job search tasks. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement using the following scale.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

1	I know a lot more than most students about how to use a wide range of job opportunity sources.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I have a good idea of what my job market opportunities are like.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I am confident of my ability to make a good impression in job interviews.	1	2	3	4	5
4	In general, I'm not very good at impressing potential employers with my qualifications.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I have no idea which is the best way to look for a job.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I know exactly how to find the kind of job I'm looking for.	1	2	3	4	5
7	If I'm really interested in a job, I can persuade the employer to make me an offer.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I doubt that I will be able to locate as many job openings as other students like me in the job market.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I don't have any trouble finding out all I want to know about a company or job.	1	2	3	4	5
10	Overall, I don't expect to be very good at job search.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION 4

Some people make use of their networks in their job search and career advancement. Below are a number of statements related to networking. For each statement please indicate your agreement or disagreement.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

1	I am comfortable asking my friends for advice regarding my job search.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I don't like to bother people about my job search because I know they are busy.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I don't mind asking family members and relatives if they have any job leads for me.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I am comfortable asking previous co-workers or acquaintances for their assistance in my job search.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I don't like to ask people for job leads or advice because it puts them on the spot or imposes on them.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I am comfortable following up with people once I have contacted them about my interest in finding a job.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I am embarrassed about being unemployed and don't like to talk about it with others.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I don't like to call friends of friends about possible job openings.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION 5

Career choices may also be influenced by how a person perceives him/herself. This section is about how yourself perceptions. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement to statements below.

1	2	3	4
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

1	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	1	2	3	4
2	At times I think I am no good at all.	1	2	3	4
3	I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	1	2	3	4
4	I am able to do things as well as most other people.	1	2	3	4
5	I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	1	2	3	4
6	I certainly feel useless at times.	1	2	3	4
7	I feel that I'm a person of worth.	1	2	3	4
8	I wish I could have more respect for myself.	1	2	3	4
9	All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.	1	2	3	4
10	I take a positive attitude toward myself.	1	2	3	4

SECTION 6

Below are some statements about your university degree and employment opportunities. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement to the best of your knowledge.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

1	I achieve high grades in my studies.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I regard my academic work as top priority.	1	2	3	4	5
3	Employers are eager to employ graduates from my university.	1	2	3	4	5
4	The status of this university is a significant asset to me in job seeking.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Employers specifically target this university in order to recruit individuals from my subject area(s).	1	2	3	4	5
6	My university has an outstanding reputation in my field(s) of study.	1	2	3	4	5
7	A lot more people apply for my degree than there are places available.	1	2	3	4	5
8	My chosen subject(s) rank(s) highly in terms of social status.	1	2	3	4	5
9	People in the career I am aiming for are in high demand in the external labour market.	1	2	3	4	5
10	My degree is seen as leading to a specific career that is generally perceived as highly desirable.	1	2	3	4	5
11	There is generally a strong demand for graduates at the present time.	1	2	3	4	5
12	There are plenty of job vacancies in the geographical area where I am looking.	1	2	3	4	5
13	I can easily find out about opportunities in my chosen field.	1	2	3	4	5
14	The skills and abilities that I possess are what employers are looking for.	1	2	3	4	5
15	I am generally confident of success in job interviews and selection events.	1	2	3	4	5
16	I feel I could get any job so long as my skills and experience are reasonably relevant.	1	2	3	4	5
17	My personal networks help me in my career.	1	2	3	4	5
18	I can use my professional networks and business contacts to develop my career.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION 7

This section is about your career preferences and consists of four parts. Please read the instructions for each part and complete accordingly.

PART 1. The statements below refer to the importance of employers in your career. Please indicate the importance of each statement for you in your career using the following scale.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all important	Not very important	Neither unimportant, nor important	Important	Extremely important

How important is it to you to have a career where...

1	You work your way up through the ranks of a well-known company.	1	2	3	4	5
2	You progress by moving from one employer to another.	1	2	3	4	5
3	You progress by being promoted within one company.	1	2	3	4	5
4	You change employer frequently.	1	2	3	4	5
5	You can count on long-term employment with one employer.	1	2	3	4	5

PART 2. We now want to know about the extent to which you prefer to integrate your career into your everyday life. Please indicate the importance of each statement for you in your career using the following scale.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all important	Not very important	Neither unimportant, nor important	Important	Extremely important

How important is it to you to have a career where...

1	Your work does not have a negative impact on your quality of life.	1	2	3	4	5
2	You save your energy and effort for things outside work.	1	2	3	4	5
3	You live where you want rather than where your career demands.	1	2	3	4	5
4	You have sufficient flexibility to accommodate a partner's	1	2	3	4	5

	career.					
5	You have a sense of balance between work commitments and home life.	1	2	3	4	5
6	You spend your energy enjoying yourself rather than building a career.	1	2	3	4	5

PART 3. Next, we want to know how you prefer to progress in your career. Please indicate the importance of each statement for you in your career using the following scale.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all important	Not very Important	Neither unimportant, nor important	Important	Extremely important

How important is it to you to have a career where...

1	You use the training you receive in the early part of your career in other work contexts later on.	1	2	3	4	5
2	You devote time and energy in the early years to learning a profession.	1	2	3	4	5
3	You gain a qualification that gives you the option of doing something different later on.	1	2	3	4	5
4	You are constantly building up your CV.	1	2	3	4	5
5	You acquire skills that can be applied in many different work contexts.	1	2	3	4	5
6	You choose jobs that are interesting rather than jobs with a career path.	1	2	3	4	5
7	Day-to-day challenge takes precedence over long-term career development.	1	2	3	4	5
8	You progress by developing expertise in a profession or specialist field.	1	2	3	4	5
9	You live for the moment and do not worry about how quickly your career progresses.	1	2	3	4	5

PART 4. This part inquires about your entrepreneurial preferences. Please indicate the importance of each statement for you in your career using the following scale.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all important	Not very important	Neither unimportant, nor important	Important	Extremely important

How important is it to you to have a career where...

1	You work for other people until you have enough experience to work for yourself.	1	2	3	4	5
2	You start your own business.	1	2	3	4	5
3	You do something entrepreneurial.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION 8

This final section asks some questions about your background. All information is confidential and anonymised.

- Your age _____
- Are you... Female_____ Male_____
- Which university awarded your degree? (most recent degree):

- What degree subject(s) did you do? (most recent degree):

- What was your degree class attained from your most recent degree?

- During your university education did you do any term-time work?
Yes_____ No_____ (if No, please proceed to Question 8)
- Was your term-time work related to your degree?
Yes_____ No_____
- Did you receive any guidance regarding your career decision making?
Yes_____ No_____ (if No, please proceed to Question 10)
- Who did you receive guidance from: (please tick as appropriate)
____ Career advisor at university
____ Academic advisor at university
____ Professional contacts working in my academic field of education

- Other professional contacts
- Parents / Relatives
- Friends working in my academic field of education
- Other friends
- Other (please specify) _____

Questions 10 - 13 are about your parents. In most cases our parents' occupation and education influence the choices we make. Therefore, we are also interested in your family background.

10. Mother's highest level of qualification:

- None/no qualifications
- High School or equivalent
- University Degree
- Masters or PhD Degree
- Other (Please specify) _____
- Don't know*

11. Father's highest level of qualification:

- None/no qualifications
- High School or equivalent
- University Degree
- Masters or PhD Degree
- Other (Please specify) _____
- Don't know*

12. Mother's occupational category:

- MANAGERS & SENIOR OFFICIALS (e.g., Production/ quality and customer care managers)
- PROFESSIONAL OCCUPATIONS (e.g., Chemists, medical practitioners, teaching professionals)
- ASSOCIATE PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL OCCUPATIONS (e.g., Technicians, nurses, police officers)
- ADMINISTRATIVE AND SECRETARIAL OCCUPATIONS (e.g., Secretaries, personal assistants)
- SKILLED TRADES OCCUPATIONS (e.g., Farmers, plumbers, tailors)
- PERSONAL SERVICE OCCUPATIONS (e.g., Educational / leisure assistants, travel agents)
- SALES AND CUSTOMER SERVICE OCCUPATIONS (e.g., Sales assistants and retail cashiers)

PROCESS, PLANT AND MACHINE OPERATIVES (e.g., Transport drivers, taxi and cab drivers)

ELEMENTARY OCCUPATIONS (e.g., Farm / forestry workers, postal worker)

13. Father's occupational category:

MANAGERS & SENIOR OFFICIALS (e.g., Production/ quality and customer care managers)

PROFESSIONAL OCCUPATIONS (e.g., Chemists, medical practitioners, teaching professionals)

ASSOCIATE PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL OCCUPATIONS (e.g., Technicians, nurses, police officers)

ADMINISTRATIVE AND SECRETARIAL OCCUPATIONS (e.g., Secretaries, personal assistants)

SKILLED TRADES OCCUPATIONS (e.g., Farmers, plumbers, tailors)

PERSONAL SERVICE OCCUPATIONS (e.g., Educational / leisure assistants, travel agents)

SALES AND CUSTOMER SERVICE OCCUPATIONS (e.g., Sales assistants and retail cashiers)

PROCESS, PLANT AND MACHINE OPERATIVES (e.g., Transport drivers, taxi and cab drivers)

ELEMENTARY OCCUPATIONS (e.g., Farm / forestry workers, postal worker)

Finally, we would like to learn how you heard about this survey.

14. I heard about this survey through...

Careers service at university

Departmental announcement

Social networks (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)

Friends

Other (please specify)

**THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE SURVEY!!!
 GOOD LUCK ON YOUR CAREER AS A GRADUATE!
 REMEMBER, YOU CAN ALWAYS SEEK CAREER RELATED HELP AND
 SUPPORT FROM YOUR UNIVERSITY'S CAREERS SERVICE...
 PLEASE INFORM OTHER GRADUATES OF '09 ABOUT THIS SURVEY...
 YOUR HELP IS VERY MUCH APPRECIATED!!!**

**Appendix II: Binary logistic comparison of graduate characteristics
across cohorts (N=433)**

	β
Age	.96
Male	1.28
New university	1.11
<i>Degree subject^a</i>	
Non-professional ^b	1.74*
Business and administrative	.90
First or upper second class	.62
<i>Parents' education^c</i>	
Mother: University or higher	1.09
Father: University or higher	.85
<i>Parents' occupation^d</i>	
Mother: High skilled	1.43
Father: High skilled	1.13
<i>Job attribute preferences</i>	
Promotion opportunities	.78
Pay	1.23
Relations with supervisor/manager	.77
Job security	1.50
A job where you can use initiative	1.25
Work you like doing	.55
Convenient work hours	.84
Choice over hours of work	1.74
Opportunity to use abilities	1.76
Fringe benefits	.31
Easy workload	.92
Training & development opportunities	.95
Physical work conditions	2.11
Variety in the type of work	.89
Friendly people to work with	1.04
Location	.66

Note. Data source: Survey of 2009/2010 graduates; ^a Comparison category: Professional degree subjects (i.e., Engineering, law, medicine and sciences); ^b Non-professional degree subjects refer to arts, creative arts, humanities, and social sciences; ^c Comparison category: No qualifications or high school or equivalent; ^d Comparison category: Intermediate and low skilled occupations.

Appendix III: Distribution of occupations in the SS06 (N=488), %

	Managerial	Professional	Associate professional	Admin/ secretarial	Other low skilled
113 Functional managers	50%				
123 Managers in service industries	13%				
115 Financial managers	8%				
112 Production managers	7%				
116 Managers in retail	7%				
231 Teaching professionals		39%			
221 Health professionals		15%			
213 ICT professional		13%			
212 Engineering professionals		6%			
243 Architects, surveyors		6%			
353 Business & finance assoc professionals			15%		
321 Health assoc professionals			11%		
354 Sales assoc professionals			11%		
323 Social welfare assoc professionals			10%		
342 Design assoc professionals			8%		
412 Administrative: finance				41%	
415 Administrative: general				18%	
413 Administrative: records				16%	
411 Administrative: government				14%	
421 Secretarial occupations				10%	
612 Childcare/ personal					16%
611 Healthcare & personal services					13%
711 Sales assistants					10%
721 Customer service					7%
531 Construction trades					4%

Note. Data source: 2006 Skills Survey.

Appendix IV: Interview schedule

CONTEMPORARY GRADUATE CAREERS STUDY

Before we begin,

- Your personal data will be processed completely anonymously and in strict confidentiality.
- The interview will be transcribed and stored electronically. Participants will be given individual codes and names of individual respondents will not be stored.
- The study will be performed following all academic and ethical guidelines for qualitative research.
- Your participation in the research is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the interview at any point without giving a reason.

BACKGROUND/DEMOGRAPHICS

- How old are you?
- When did you receive your first degree?
- Marital status
- Number of children / dependants?
- Parents' occupation
- Parents' education
- Years of work experience after having completed first degree
- Term – time work experience – Yes / No
- If yes, was it relevant to your degree?
- Organisational tenure
- Job Tenure
- Part-time / Full-time status
- Permanent / Temporary

DEGREE RELATED

- Degree subject
- Degree class
- Reasons to choose the particular degree subject – initial career direction? / interest formation?
- Postgraduate study?
- Reasons for postgrad study
- By the end of first degree:

- What kind of career trajectory/direction did you have in mind?
- What were your job preferences?
- Did you receive any help in your career decision making? (e.g., careers counselling / academic advisor / friends / family)
- How much importance did you attach to your career?

CAREER HISTORY

- Jobs held so far (number)
- For each job:
 - Can you describe what the job involved?
 - How long did you do this job for?
 - How would you evaluate job quality of this job? Why?
- Job satisfaction
- Organisational commitment
- Do you think this job fits with your career interests? / did it change your career interests?
- Reasons for job / organisation / occupation change (career, family, major life events, money, redundancy, chance)
- Comparative job skills
- Comparative organisational practices

CURRENT JOB

- Reasons to apply / take
- Job skills
- Organisational practices
- Job satisfaction
- Organisational commitment
- Fit with career direction/ interests
- Intentions to leave
- Physical & psychological well – being – stress, self-esteem
- Career success & satisfaction

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

- Throughout your career history have you ever felt underemployment at any one of the jobs you took so far? If yes, how did that make you feel?
- Did you experience any major life events that may have affected your choices?
- How much importance to you attach to your career now?
- If you were to consider a career change, what type of occupations/jobs/organisations would you consider?
- What are your preferences for the future, in terms of your career progression?
- Do you think a future promotion is likely?
- What is your future outlook – career intentions?

**Appendix V: Career progression for ‘stuck’, ‘wrong-foot’-‘right-track’
and ‘right-foot’-‘right-track’ interview participants**

Career progression for ‘stuck’ participants (N=5)

Participant	Career history	SOC2000^a
35 (1.5 years)	Chamber of commerce rep	Non-grad
	Italian Consulate rep	Non-grad
	Waitress	Non-grad
P32 (2 years)	<i>MSc</i>	
	Events coordinator	Assoc prof
P10 (2 years)	Waiter	Non-grad
	<i>Retrains: Teaching English</i>	
	English teacher	P/M
	<i>Retrains: Sound engineering</i>	
	Runner	Non-grad
P11 (4 years)	Waitress	Non-grad
	<i>Travel</i>	
	Restaurant supervisor	Assoc prof
	<i>Travel</i>	
	Waitress	Non-grad
	<i>Travel</i>	
	Waitress	Non-grad
	<i>RAF application, rejection</i>	
P22 (5 years)	Administrative assistant	Admin
	Sales representative/assistant	Non-grad
	<i>MSc</i>	
	Sales representative/assistant	Non-grad
	<i>Starts PhD (1 year only)</i>	
	Sales representative/assistant	Non-grad
	<i>PG Cert</i>	
	Sales representative/assistant	Non-grad
Business inquiry officer	Assoc prof	

Note. ^a Non-grad: non-graduate occupations, Admin: administrative/secretarial occupations, Assoc prof: Associate professional occupations, P/M: professional/managerial occupations

Career progression for 'wrong-foot' - 'slow-track' participants (N=12)

Participant	Career history	SOC2000^a
P36 (1 year)	<i>MSc</i>	
	HR assistant	Admin
	Waitress	Non-grad
	<i>Starts PhD</i>	
P13 (1.5 years)	Social support worker (PT)	Non-grad
	Research assistant (PT)	P/M
P8 (2 years)	<i>PG Dip</i>	
	Box office	Admin
	Events coordinator	Assoc prof
P25 (3 years)	Risk assistant	Assoc prof
	Risk analyst	Assoc prof
	<i>Redundancy</i>	
	Risk analyst	Assoc prof
P21 (5 years)	Sales manager	P/M
	<i>Travel</i>	
	Sales manager	P/M
	<i>MSc</i>	
	Sales manager	P/M
	<i>Starts PhD</i>	
P29 (6 years)	KTP associate	P/M
	Administrative assistant	Admin
	Assistant service manager	Assoc prof
	Technical business consultant	P/M
P28 (6 years)	<i>MSc</i>	
	Door steward	Non-grad
	Ticket sales	Non-grad
	HR assistant	Admin
	HR assistant	Admin
	HR administrator	Admin
	HR officer	Assoc prof
	<i>Redundancy</i>	
	HR officer	Assoc prof
	HR administrator	Admin
	Employment law consultant	P/M
<i>MSc</i>		
P26 (8 years)	Call centre representative	Non-grad
	Newspaper reporter	Assoc prof
	<i>Redundancy</i>	
	Call centre representative	Non-grad
	Administrator	Admin
	<i>MSc</i>	
	Administrator	Admin
Web developer	Assoc prof	

Note. ^a Non-grad: non-graduate occupations, Admin: administrative/secretarial occupations, Assoc prof: Associate professional occupations, P/M: professional/managerial occupations

Career progression for 'wrong-foot' - 'slow-track' participants (continued)

Participant	Career history	SOC2000^a
P14 (7 years) d	Management consultant	P/M
	Management consultant	P/M
	<i>Starts PhD</i>	
	Research assistant	P/M
	KTP associate	P/M
P31 (7 years)	HR rewards assistant	Admin
	Rewards analyst	Assoc prof
	Strategic planning	Assoc prof
	HR advisor	Assoc prof
	<i>MSc</i>	
	HR generalist	P/M
P1 (10 years) d	Barman	Non-grad
	Research assistant	P/M
	<i>Travel</i>	
	<i>PhD</i>	
	Research assistant	P/M
	Researcher	P/M
P4 (5 years)	Shop assistant	Non-grad
	Trainee	Assoc prof
	Gallery assistant	Assoc prof
	<i>Redundancy</i>	

Note. ^a Non-grad: non-graduate occupations, Admin: administrative/secretarial occupations, Assoc prof: Associate professional occupations, P/M: professional/managerial occupations

Career progression for 'wrong-foot' - 'fast-track' participants (N=3)

Participant	Career history	SOC2000^a
'Wrong-foot'-'fast-track'		
P30 (10 years) d	Call centre representative	Non-grad
	Training assistant	Admin
	Project manager	P/M
	HR manager	P/M
	<i>Voluntary redundancy</i>	
	<i>MSc</i>	
P15 (2 years)	Till supervisor	Admin
	Personal banking advisor	Assoc prof
P33 (5 years)	Call centre representative	Non-grad
	Graduate trainee	P/M
	Associate	P/M

Note. ^a Non-grad: non-graduate occupations, Admin: administrative/secretarial occupations, Assoc prof: Associate professional occupations, P/M: professional/managerial occupations

Career progression for 'right-foot' - 'slow-track' participants (N=4)

Participant	Career history	SOC2000 ^a
P19 (2 years)	Internships	
	<i>MSc</i>	
	Copywriter	Assoc prof
	Digital marketing consultant	Assoc prof
	Digital website executive	Assoc prof
P5 (6 years)	Junior buyer	Assoc prof
	<i>MSc</i>	
	Consultant	P/M
	Research analyst	P/M
P23 (9 years)	HR trainee	P/M
	Trainee personnel officer	Assoc prof
	Personnel officer	Assoc prof
	HR adviser	Assoc prof
	<i>Travelling</i>	
	HR adviser	Assoc prof
	HR adviser	Assoc prof
	HR adviser	Assoc prof
P2 (10 years)	MPs press assistant	Admin
	Researcher	P/M
	Press assistant	Admin
	Press officer	Assoc prof
	Call centre rep	Non-grad
	Public involvement officer	Assoc prof
	Waiter	Non-grad
	External affairs officer	Assoc prof

Note. ^a Non-grad: non-graduate occupations, Admin: administrative/secretarial occupations, Assoc prof: Associate professional occupations, P/M: professional/managerial occupations

Career progression for 'right-foot' - 'fast-track' participants (N=12)

Participant	Career history	SOC2000^a
P7 (6 years)	<i>MSc</i>	
	Careers adviser	Assoc prof
P17 (39 years)	Programming assistant	Admin
P24 (1.5 years)	Internship	
	IT consultant	P/M
P16 (2 years)	Associate	P/M
	Portfolio insurance	Assoc prof
P3 (2 years)	<i>MSc</i>	
	Systems testing engineer	P/M
	<i>Redundancy</i>	
P20 (2.5 years)	Internship	
	Systems analyst	P/M
P18 (4 years)	Tax assistant trainee	P/M
	Tax research	P/M
P12 (6 years)	Self-employed	
	Engineer	P/M
	Manager	P/M
P34 (6 years)	Self-employed	
	Sales manager	P/M
	Deputy manager	P/M
P6 (6 years)	Policy assistant	Admin
	Information officer	Assoc prof
	Wider role officer	Assoc prof
	Investment coordinator	P/M
P27 (6 years)	HR trainee	P/M
	HR officer	Assoc prof
	HR manager	P/M
P9 (7 years)	Systems designer	P/M
	Senior systems designer	P/M
	Consultant	P/M

Note. ^a Non-grad: non-graduate occupations, Admin: administrative/secretarial occupations, Assoc prof: Associate professional occupations, P/M: professional/managerial occupations