Utilizing a narrative methodology, this study will answer the question of “what is the experience of underemployment for educated youth?” This study aims to target a specific sector of the population: youth (ages 24-34) who are also new graduates who are looking to make this school to work transition. This research will uncover their personal stories of the process of underemployment and how it has contributed to other parts of their life. The goal is to uncover themes within each individual story as well as across stories, in order to formulate a deeper understanding of this unique experience.

Purpose of this Study:
- To fill a void in the under-researched, but relevant field, specifically joining the experience of underemployment with a young and currently effected population.

RESEARCH QUESTION
What is the experience of underemployment, as constructed in the career stories of college and university graduates?

- Primary Goal: To understand the story of their occupation and career goals from the period before graduation up until present day.
- Secondary Goal: Looking for the use of metaphor in their constructed stories.

CONTRIBUTION OF THIS RESEARCH
This research is focused mainly on the causes of underemployment, but not what it feels like for those in this position, especially as newly graduated youth.

Underemployment as a Current Societal Problem:
- Underemployment as a worldwide phenomenon and a 21st century global normality for youth in the labor market (MacDonald, 2011).
- In 2012, 1 in 4 young people with university degrees worked in “low-skilled” jobs (Statistics Canada, 2012).
- Highly educated workers are more likely to experience underemployment (e.g. Weststar, 2009).
- Underemployment spikes at age 19-24 (Tam, 2010) with a slow decline thereafter.

Psychology of Underemployment:
The psychology of underemployment is found to be negatively related to well-being. This includes psychosomatic symptoms, depression, frustration, hostility, and insecurity (e.g., Johnson & Johnson, 1992).

School to Work Transition:
The school to work transition is viewed as a traditional stressor and likely theme of unrest that has been studied by countless researchers (e.g., Ohler & Levinson, 2009).

Career Development for Youth:
It has been argued that due to assumptions after graduation, young adults are often disappointed when they do eventually enter, or attempt to enter, the labour market (e.g., Bolam & Sixsmith, 2002; Brooks & Everett, 2009).

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT LITERATURE & RESEARCH
Current research is focused mainly on the causes of underemployment, but not what it feels like for those in this position, especially as newly graduated youth.

SUMMARY OF STUDY PROCEDURES
Six to ten participants will be recruited for this qualitative narrative analysis.

Phase I:
Interested participants will be invited to contact the researcher for a phone screen to ensure they meet inclusion and exclusion criteria and then set up an orientation meeting date and time.

Phase II:
From there, participants will meet with the researcher once, for a maximum of an hour, at a location of their choice or at the University of British Columbia. This meeting will begin by the researcher reviewing concepts and limits of confidentiality and will continue with talking them about the research project, and provide them with more information and an orientation on the second phase.

Phase III:
This phase invites participants to prepare a personal story for the major life theme of career, specifically their experience of underemployment, with a five page maximum. Questions and probes will be provided to assist them in the writing process. Grammar, spelling and proper sentence structure does not matter, but consent will be gained to use the narrative in full, as part of the study data. A deadline for submission will be mutually agreed upon by the researcher and participant.

Phase IV:
Upon submission, the narratives will be analyzed using thematic analysis (Reissman 2008), and a separate metaphor analysis will occur.

Phase V:
Toward the end of the study, participants will be given the opportunity to review the analysis and verify the study’s findings for accuracy. The researcher will share the research findings with the participant and ask them if the findings represent their lived experiences, are comprehensive and are valuable (resonance, comprehensiveness and pragmatic value). The follow-up interview will take up to an hour. This follow-up meeting can occur over a multitude of mediums (in person, phone or via email), as decided by the participant.

Phase VI:
The analysis will be reviewed by an expert reviewer. This expert reviewer will evaluate the worth of the study using the three selected criteria that were proposed to the participants. This expert reviewer will be someone who works with this population and has background in career counseling. From their work with underemployed educated youth, do the themes resonate with what they have heard, Is it comprehensive and does it offer pragmatic value?

SELECTED REFERENCES

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