

Article

# The Conceptualisation of Weather as a Career Metaphor

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to offer an accessible, flexible, and homogenised approach to career counselling and career development via the conceptualisation of a new metaphor in response to evolving careers and labour markets. The research question asks: How can Weather as a Career Metaphor (WCM) offer an accessible tool for career counsellors to use with their clients across their lifespans? The theoretical framework draws together sustainable career theory and conservation of resources theory, and is complemented by the author's decade of experience providing mentoring and career coaching to individuals across the globe. The WCM is constructed of ten elements of weather that apply to different contexts and across the lifespan. These include sun, rain, drought, thunder and lightning, ice, fog, tailwind, headwind, tornado, and rainbow. The contribution comes from the conceptualisation of a new metaphor which is theoretically grounded whilst also ensuring practical relevance via accessibility and flexibility. The WCM offers a versatile tool as part of a more comprehensive toolkit for career counsellors to help their clients to understand potential challenges within contemporary labour markets. This facilitates individuals to take ownership of their careers, acquire personal resources, and take proactive steps to prepare themselves for sustainable careers across their lifespans.



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## 1. Introduction

Contemporary labour markets are global, complex and volatile environments in which the careers of individuals play out across their lifespans [1,2]. The COVID-19 pandemic as a global chance event has significantly impacted individuals regardless of their career stage. Those in secondary and tertiary education have experienced disruption to their learning and ability to gain work experience, meaning these cohorts of students are some of the least prepared for undertaking the university-to-work transition [3]. Students and recent graduates in the UK are not only calling for career support, but three in four have reported a reduction in subjective wellbeing due to the COVID-19 pandemic [4]. Unfortunately, there is a lack of resources available to meet this increased demand for career counselling and broader wellbeing support [5]. Moreover, existing career guidance is often insufficient or outdated, highlighting the need to reframe career support in transformative ways [6]. Individuals already in the labour market when the COVID-19 pandemic occurred experienced significant career shocks that were either positive or negative [7]. Some workers saw a temporary increase in their hours and unexpected promotions; some were forced to pivot to work-from-home, often balancing childcare responsibilities, whilst others lost their jobs or were furloughed and saw a temporary reduction in income as governments enforced restrictions on daily life [8]. A perceived lack of control in dealing with negative career shocks also impacted workers' mental health [9]. Therefore, access to career guidance is also essential for these individuals to help them navigate career transitions in rapidly changing labour markets [10]. The pandemic has also seen many workers re-evaluate their lives, leading to 'The Great Resignation', as people prioritise job crafting, meaningful work,

and career satisfaction [11]. Thus, employers must focus on career management as part of a more comprehensive talent management strategy in which providing employee training and coaching programmes can foster sustainable organisational performance [12].

One approach to enable individuals to make sense of their careers as they evolve over time is using metaphors [13]. This can help frame one's future career as a mental object for exploration and reflection [14]. A traditional career is often presented via the metaphor of a career ladder whereby a person progresses from one role to another in a linear upwards fashion, and success is determined by job title and remuneration [15]. This metaphor has subsequently advanced to capture movement laterally between ladders alongside the notion of a dual career path whereby technical workers have the same hierarchical opportunities for career progression as managerial workers [16]. However, the career ladder metaphor in isolation is no longer fit for purpose when discussing contemporary careers. New metaphors for career interventions have since emerged to help individuals understand that their careers will likely unfold over more than forty years with the potential for movement across various companies, sectors, and locations. Such metaphors include careers as a game, a journey, encounters, relationships, stories, and inheritance [13,14,17–23]. However, these metaphors are more than ten years old, and in that time career theory and labour markets have continued to evolve.

In response, this paper aims to offer an accessible, flexible, and homogenised approach to career counselling and career development via the conceptualisation of a new metaphor. Weather is a neutral conversation topic that remains dominant over time due to the rapidly changing nature of the phenomenon. The weather reflects a particular place's environmental conditions at a specific time. These conditions can change quickly in the same way that the environmental conditions in one's career can change rapidly. Rather than fear these changes, career counsellors and career guidance should focus on enabling clients to develop resilience and frame change as an opportunity for career advancement and transformation [6,10,24]. Consequently, this paper adopts weather as a metaphor and addresses the following research question: How can Weather as a Career Metaphor (WCM) offer an accessible tool for career counsellors to use with their clients across their lifespans?

The WCM offers a versatile tool as part of a more comprehensive toolkit for career counsellors to help their clients to understand potential challenges within contemporary labour markets. This responds to calls for integrating personal and career counselling for sustainable development [7]. It can also enable individuals to take ownership of their careers, acquire personal resources, and take proactive steps to prepare themselves for when career shocks inevitably occur [25–28]. The subsequent improvements to employability, employment, and sustainable career outcomes are associated with enhanced wellbeing, career satisfaction, and life satisfaction [29,30]. Organisations and national economies gain, via increased productivity, competitive advantage, profitability, and tax revenue for investment in services and infrastructure [31]. The WCM can provoke fresh thought and innovation in our understanding of career counselling and career development by using different weather conditions to discuss and describe career-related phenomena. This acknowledges the need for a new metaphor that describes contemporary career environments adequately and clearly. The WCM can facilitate discussion concerning a specific career situation, career challenges, and career development. Its versatility means that the WCM can be applied to clients across the lifespan, regardless of their career stage. The WCM also advances the previous use of metaphors that reference a more limited range of weather phenomena (e.g., [17,32]), and other intervention approaches such as acceptance and commitment therapy [33].

In this paper, a theoretical framework of sustainable career theory and conservation of resources theory is presented. Then, I draw on over a decade of personal experience as a coach and mentor for students and graduates across different countries and continents to conceptualise the ten weather elements of the WCM. Combining the theoretical framework with my lived experience ensures that the proposed WCM is theoretically sound and can

be implemented in practice. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications and limitations of the WCM.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework underpinning the conceptualisation of the WCM draws together aspects of sustainable career theory and conservation of resources theory. Van der Heijden and De Vos [34] (p. 7) define a sustainable career as sequences of career experiences reflected through a variety of patterns over time, thereby crossing several social spaces, characterized by individual agency, herewith providing meaning to the individual.

The conceptualisation of sustainable careers has emerged as a topic of significant interest by career theory scholars in recent years (e.g., [2,31,35,36]). Specifically, a sustainable career has three dimensions of person, context, and time, and departs from previous individualist views of careers by acknowledging the role of the external environment [2]. The antecedents of career sustainability are employability and career ownership as a way to embrace and navigate uncertainty [31]. The outcomes are wellbeing, career satisfaction, and life satisfaction [35,36].

Furthermore, the conservation of resources theory plays a vital role in a sustainable career since it captures the relationship between resources and stress [37]. Individuals seek to acquire new and additional resources while safeguarding against losing their existing resources [38]. Psychological resources can offer resilience to the individual when they experience a negative career shock [39] and offer career sustainability across the lifespan [28,40,41]. Resources aggregate or fail to do so in clusters, and the aggregation of resources accumulates in the abstract notion of a resource caravan [42]. A lack of resources within one's resource caravan to meet the demands of a job can lead to burnout [43,44]. Similarly, job demands significantly lower than the resources one possesses can result in low satisfaction and high turnover levels [45]. Individuals aim to accumulate and retain resources and seek out opportunities for employment to use these resources to realise career progression, life wellbeing, and satisfaction [28]. The role of the external environment in contemporary careers is also relevant in this context, since it represents the abstract notion of resource passageways [42]. These are necessary for individuals to mobilise their resource caravans and operationalise the resources within [45,46].

Thus, the WCM provides career counsellors with a metaphor to help their clients understand the benefits of acquiring personal resources to navigate chance events as they occur in an environmental context at various points across the career span. This can foster a growth mindset through lifelong learning and career ownership, reflecting the aforementioned antecedents of career sustainability [31,47,48]. Moreover, the versatility of the WCM means that a career counsellor can use the metaphor with clients regardless of their age, gender or cultural background, whilst also acknowledging how these factors can influence one's perspective of career sustainability [49]. By understanding individual and contextual factors, the WCM can help clients set goals to proactively develop and acquire resources in their resource caravans to facilitate career sustainability.

## 3. The Author's Lived Experience

I have spent over a decade providing career coaching and mentoring to individuals across the lifespan and around the world. When using existing career metaphors, I have found them lacking because they have failed to evolve in line with emerging literature and lived experiences concerning careers and contemporary labour markets. Many career metaphors used in career counselling were conceptualised over a decade ago (e.g., [13,14,17–23]). This is problematic, given that sustainable career theory in a Vocational Behaviour (VB) context emerged in 2015 [34] and remains in an embryonic state across the VB and Human Resource Management (HRM) literature streams [2,31,36]. I have also observed a disconnect between metaphors within career theory literature and metaphors used in real life. For example, many of my fellow practitioners view the Squiggly Career Metaphor introduced in 2020 as innovative [50]. However, I consider it to mainly replicate

boundaryless and protean career metaphors that have existed in the career theory literature for over a quarter of a century [51]. Additionally, existing metaphors are often contained to specific life stages or specific life events rather than offering a holistic and lifelong tool for individuals to continually revisit [52]. Moreover, from supporting individuals across multiple countries and continents, I have also seen that some metaphors are more beneficial in particular cultural contexts than others [1,52]. Therefore, the WCM presented in this paper is appealing since the weather is a neutral topic that we all experience, albeit in different ways, depending on where we live at any one time.

#### 4. Conceptualisation of Weather as a Career Metaphor (WCM)

The contemporary career theories presented as the theoretical framework, combined with my aforementioned lived experiences, now underpin the conceptualisation of the WCM. Ten weather elements are presented for illustrative purposes and are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Ten weather elements.

ID	Element	Represents
1	Sun	Intrinsically rewarding employment
2	Rain	Personal growth through the acquisition of resources
3	Drought	Career stagnation
4	Thunder and Lightning	Visible conflicts with other people
5	Ice	Hidden challenges that cannot always be seen
6	Fog	Uncertainty and an inability to see ahead
7	Tailwind	Support mechanisms for career progression
8	Headwind	Barriers to career progression
9	Tornado	Negative outcome of a career shock or a chance event
10	Rainbow	Positive outcome of a career shock or a chance event

However, the choice of which weather elements to use and how to frame them should be driven by the preferences and needs of the client with support from the career counsellor. This also requires an awareness of cultural sensitivities for clients from different countries where some of the weather elements described here might be absent, or others not listed here might be preponderant.

##### 4.1. Sun

The Sun represents intrinsically rewarding employment. Sustainable career theory highlights the role of the career as a calling whereby an individual creates meaning and crafts career trajectories through congruence between their work and their personal values [53]. Furthermore, the psychological rewards from undertaking intrinsically valuable work can lead to career sustainability and outcomes of enhanced wellbeing and satisfaction [54]. However, an individual also requires time in the shade to recharge (e.g., vacation days, evenings, weekends), since even rewarding work that provides a sense of purpose can lead to burnout if the demands placed on an individual exceed the resources they can draw on from their resource caravan [44]. Burnout has also been linked with reductions in career satisfaction, internal marketability, and career sustainability [43]. An abundance of clouds in the sky might signify that one's employment is less intrinsically rewarding due to a partial blocking of the Sun. This would indicate that individuals may view their current employment as a job rather than a career or a calling. Such occurrences are associated with lower levels of career sustainability [54].

##### 4.2. Rain

Rain represents personal growth through the acquisition of resources. In the same way plants and crops require rain to grow, a growth mindset is necessary to manage career shocks and career sustainability [47,48]. Resources aggregate in clusters via a resource caravan, and opportunities for intrinsically valuable employment represent the context

of a passageway along which one's resource caravan can travel [42,45]. This equips the individual with a store of resources to manage variable contexts and conditions across the lifespan, capturing the person, context, and time dimensions of a sustainable career [2].

Personal growth can be fostered through taking ownership of one's career and seeking out opportunities for development [55], for example, undertaking an internship to overcome barriers to entry into a desired profession [56]. The ability to articulate and signal experiences, resources, and capabilities is also a core component of career sustainability [57]. This encompasses forming a professional identity that dynamically evolves across the lifespan [58]. Learning on the job can also build self-efficacy. Thus, employment that provides guidance, training, and feedback can aid career development. Furthermore, participation in extracurricular activities has been shown to enhance employability perceptions [59], reduce stress levels, and improve future wellbeing outcomes across the lifespan [60].

#### 4.3. Drought

A drought represents career stagnation. The client has secured employment and progressed in their career, but the initial growth phase has now plateaued. The absence of a growth mindset and a commitment to lifelong learning threatens career sustainability [31]. The absence of rain captures a lack of desire for career ownership or accumulating additional resources within a resource caravan [44]. The evolving nature of the context of work requires the person to adapt to new processes and approaches, particularly for jobs at risk of automation [31]. Furthermore, as the nature of job demands changes, the perception of one's employability can drop, leading to an increased risk of mental health issues and a general reduction in wellbeing and career satisfaction [61]. The organisations that employ these individuals also suffer as a drop in motivation translates into lower levels of creativity and productivity [36]. This highlights the importance of organisations supporting their employees to continue professional development and linking such endeavours to performance metrics.

#### 4.4. Thunder and Lightning

Thunder and lightning represent visible conflicts with other people in the workplace. This can either be through constructive conflict to clear the air or harmful conflict resulting in a dramatic storm. Whilst constructive conflict can foster creativity and a sense of connectedness with other employees [62], destructive conflict reduces levels of career satisfaction, productivity, and performance [63]. Encouraging the practice of mindfulness has been shown to reduce harmful conflicts by reducing judgemental and reactionary antisocial behaviours [64]. Mindfulness can increase collaborative orientations and decrease conflict avoidance [65]. Therefore, encouraging an individual to participate in mindfulness activities appears to offer a way to enhance psychological capital and associated perceptions of employability [55]. Subsequently, acquiring these personal resources enables the individual to reduce the occurrences and impacts of harmful conflicts and cope with increased levels of constructive conflicts [44]. The outcome is lower levels of stress and an increased likelihood of career sustainability [27,45].

#### 4.5. Ice

Ice represents the hidden challenges that cannot always be seen. These challenges often occur beyond an individual's control, although the action taken in response to experiencing a patch of ice requires some individual agency. The types of hidden challenges a person faces are likely to change across the lifespan, through exposure to different employment sectors and during changes to their employment status. This encompasses the three dimensions of career sustainability: person, context, and time [2]. For example, an individual seeking employment may face unconscious bias during the application process based on race, age, gender, ethnicity, disability, religion, or sexual orientation, among others [66]. Within the workplace, work politics may negatively influence career satisfaction, productivity, and trust [63]. Individuals need to be aware of ice patches and

seek to reduce the risk of ice causing career slip-ups. In a similar response to thunder and lightning, acquiring psychological resources can help a person overcome ice patches and thaw icy relationships. This can foster a culture of trust and respect, resulting in reduced workplace stress and increased career satisfaction for the individual and their colleagues [44,62]. Organisations also need to challenge inherent bias in their attraction and selection processes, perhaps through broader diversity representation in the teams tasked with writing job descriptions, conducting interviews, and making decisions on hiring panels [10,67]. The subsequent benefits of a diverse workforce can increase teamwork and workplace satisfaction, leading to improved organisational efficiency and performance [68].

#### 4.6. Fog

Fog represents uncertainty and an inability to see ahead and has previously been incorporated into career metaphors (e.g., [13]). The nature of the uncertainty can evolve across the lifespan. During school and university, a person may find it challenging to choose which subjects to study [67]. Throughout one's career, decisions will have to be made on whether to career pivot or remain on an existing career trajectory. Traditionally, careers were stable, bounded to a single organisation, and followed clear hierarchical progression over time [69]. Contemporary careers can still be bounded but are more likely to be boundaryless and unfold across multiple organisations, sectors, or geographical locations [70]. The reduction in bounded careers and an increase in more boundaryless careers can make it harder for a person to see a clear career path. However, career agency can help an individual embrace and benefit from the flexibility for inter- or intra-organisational mobility, national or international mobility, a change of employment sector via a career pivot, or the pursuit of entrepreneurial endeavours. Moreover, at the end of one's career, uncertainty may occur in deciding when to retire and how to transition out of the labour market [54]. In each case, the choice to pursue one path is also a choice not to follow an alternative route at that point in time. Career counsellors thus have a critical role in supporting their clients to make informed decisions regarding their careers. This support can also encompass setting and monitoring goals to enhance self-efficacy, leading to increased motivation and career agency [45,71,72]. Through such an approach, career counsellors can act as a guide through the fog and lead an individual back to the sunshine of an intrinsically rewarding and sustainable career or into the sunset of retirement.

#### 4.7. Tailwind

A tailwind represents the support mechanism for career progression. This could be a mentor who supports a person through different career stages, a sponsor that secures an individual a promotion by being a 'voice in the room' and advocating on behalf of the individual [73], or a spouse who takes on additional responsibilities at home to enable their partner to realise career advancement opportunities and associated job and life satisfaction [74]. It can also be the career counsellor or the employer who support the development and wellbeing of an individual. The tailwind moderates other weather elements; an increased tailwind leads to an increase in positive outcomes and accelerates the realisation of these outcomes. A tailwind also decreases the severity of adverse career outcomes and reduces the duration over which such negative consequences occur.

#### 4.8. Headwind

A headwind represents the barriers to career progression. This could be the need to care for dependents such as children, elderly parents, or a partner whilst simultaneously undertaking a career [74], or the long daily commute that negatively impacts life satisfaction and subjective wellbeing [75]. It could also be mental or physical health issues experienced by the individual that drain their resource reservoir [39]. A headwind leads to resource depletion when work and home life demands exceed the resources available to a person, leading to loss cycles and an increased risk of stress and burnout [38,44]. The headwind also moderates other weather elements, albeit in the opposite direction to a tailwind. A

headwind increases the severity of adverse career outcomes and increases the duration over which such negative consequences occur. A headwind also leads to a reduction in positive results and delays the realisation of these outcomes.

#### 4.9. Tornado

A tornado represents a negative outcome of a career shock or a chance event. Like a tornado, the negative effect of a career shock or chance event wreaks havoc in a short period, leaving the individual to rebuild their career from the rubble. The impact could also be considered similar to a tsunami, whereby an individual can see a problem approaching but is powerless to do anything about it. Akkermans et al. [76] observe how career shocks are related to contextual factors and outline their role in developing sustainable careers from an individual agency perspective. Negative career shocks can undermine subjective career success, mediating the relationship between career competencies and perceived employability [47]. Therefore, encouraging an individual to acquire career resources can create a higher level of resilience, reducing how a negative career shock impacts one's career [25,77]. This aligns with the views of Donald et al. [55], who reported that career ownership and the acquisition of personal resources, including skills and psychological capital, leads to increased levels of perceived employability in individuals undertaking the university-to-work transition.

Additionally, Leigh and Melwani [78] observed how the experience of the same career shock could vary based on the social identity of the person experiencing it. Akkermans et al. [26] support this position and use the example of the loss of employment. They found that when the salient features of an individual's social identity are primarily linked to their career, they are likely to feel a career shock to a greater extent than a person whose salient social identity is dominated by nonwork determinants. This captures the interlink between the person, the context they are operating in, and the evolution of their career over time [2].

#### 4.10. Rainbow

A rainbow represents the positive outcome of a career shock or a chance event. The positive outcome enables an individual to draw together the intrinsically rewarding employment of the Sun with personal growth through acquiring resources from the rain. This brings a temporary boost of vibrancy, colour, and joy to one's career via a synergy effect. Positive career shocks can enhance subjective career success, mediating the relationship between career resources and perceived employability [47].

It is also noteworthy that short-term negative consequences can translate into longer-term positive outcomes [25]. Thus, an outcome initially perceived as a tornado can later become a rainbow as the conditions evolve [78]. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic led some people to lose their jobs. However, toxic work environments can lead to reduced career satisfaction, increased levels of stress, and an increased risk of burnout [44]. Thus, if the COVID-19 pandemic as a negative career shock forced the individual to leave a toxic work environment, this could lead to improved levels of career sustainability in the future.

Anticipating contextual factors and change events as career shocks can help a person plan for chance events, even when the exact nature of the specific event is unknown [79]. Therefore, career counsellors should highlight the critical role that career ownership and a growth mindset can play in proactively preparing clients for the inevitable eventuality of career shocks. Career counsellors may wish to cite findings from a study of 772 early-career employees, whereby 69.1% of participants reported that a chance event had influenced their career [80]. Furthermore, this figure will likely have increased since 2005, accounting for the impacts of the 2007–2008 Global Financial Crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Operationalisation of the Weather as a Career Metaphor (WCM)

The research question set out earlier in the paper asked: 'How can Weather as a Career Metaphor (WCM) offer an accessible tool for career counsellors to use with their clients

across their lifespans?’ Section 4 of this paper introduced ten distinct weather elements that can initially enable the client to explore each aspect in isolation. However, when I have been supporting clients, I often find that encouraging them to take a more holistic and integrated view enables them to consider a broader array of factors and potential actions. This approach can also help overcome the narrow focus of existing metaphors that can unintentionally mislead clients by obscuring nuances or distorting perceptions [81].

The WCM also lets us consider that the weather is constantly changing (especially here, in the United Kingdom) in the same way that one’s career continues to evolve over time [2]. In our day-to-day lives, we acknowledge that we cannot necessarily control the weather, and instead, we prepare for different eventualities. Similarly, in our careers, embracing change and acquiring personal resources in our resource caravan can offer us an array of responses to new or recurring situations and contexts [27,42]. For example, on a hot day, we might wear sunscreen, a hat, and sunglasses, whereas when it is raining we might wear a coat or carry an umbrella. Each of these resources is useful in a specific circumstance, yet is of less use in the context of different weather elements. Furthermore, we might run out of sunscreen or need to replace an old coat in the same way that one needs to constantly refresh their skills via a commitment to lifelong learning to remain relevant to the evolving needs of the workplace and broader labour market [31].

The WCM also enables us to view the weather from a lens of seasons whereby one either moves from spring to summer, to autumn, and to winter from the point of entry to the point of exit from the labour market (e.g., student, early-stage, mid-stage, or late-stage career), or one moves iteratively through these seasons multiple times across their career. Certain weather elements or combinations of weather elements may dominate within certain seasons or career phases. This can help individuals understand their different career stages, be aware of the barriers they are likely to encounter, and subsequently gather appropriate resources.

Our lived experiences can also help us identify ways to continue gain cycles and break loss cycles as we build resource caravans [37,38,42,45]. The experience of career shocks as captured by tornadoes or rainbows can help us identify how to prepare and react should the same, or similar, career shocks occur later. However, students without labour market experience need to be ready for such career shocks without having experienced them directly. This highlights the value mentors and career counsellors can offer in sharing their experiences. Perhaps in the same way that some parts of the world have regular drills to prepare for certain natural disasters, there is also an opportunity to simulate these ideas whereby a mentor or career counsellor sets the scene, and the individual responds with a plan and the resources they would need to implement the plan. Feedback is subsequently provided on alternative approaches that they might not have considered.

### *5.2. Theoretical and Practical Implications*

Weather is a phenomenon that we all experience, albeit in different ways. Thus, a person experiences the weather and their career within a context that evolves over time, capturing the three dimensions of career sustainability [2]. Sustainable careers and intrinsically valuable work take on greater importance as national governments continue to raise the retirement age for workers, thus extending the length of their careers [54]. The framework that underpins the WCM incorporates two contemporary career theories of sustainable career theory [34] and the conservation of resources theory [37], whilst also drawing on the author’s decade of experience providing mentoring and career counselling. The approach highlights the usefulness of metaphors in providing a bridge between theory and practice within a career counselling context [82]. The WCM as a metaphor helps capture contemporary careers’ complexity and dynamic nature in an accessible and versatile manner, offering an innovative tool for career counsellors to use with their clients. The WCM can help clients make sense of their careers and frame their future since metaphors offer exploration and reflection opportunities [13,14,17–23].



One approach to using the WCM as a career counselling tool is to explore weather elements in isolation with the client by focusing on a 'current state' and a 'desired future state'. For example, when discussing the sun element, a career counsellor might ask the client, 'how intrinsically rewarding is your current career?' or 'how could your career be more intrinsically rewarding in the future?'. Alternatively, when discussing the headwind element, a career counsellor might ask the client, 'what are the current barriers to your career progression?' and 'what additional barriers do you feel might exist in the future?'. These questions provide initial insight into how clients frame their work and personal values [53]. The WCM could be combined with other coaching tools such as personality tests to provide additional insight. Focusing on the 'current state' and 'desired future state' can also help identify goals for the client to pursue. These goals may focus on acquiring resources to enhance self-efficacy, leading to increased motivation and career agency [44,72].

An alternative approach (which can also be complimentary) involves using the WCM as a tool to explore the links between the different weather elements. For example, the career counsellor might ask the client to consider 'what resources would you need if a negative career shock were to occur?' or 'what support mechanisms do you have for career progression, and how can these help you to overcome uncertainty and become aware of hidden challenges?'. The career counsellor might also suggest an extension activity whereby the client is tasked with using the WCM as a basis for discussion with their mentor. This could offer an opportunity for the client to gain insights based on the lived experiences of their mentor. The client could then reflect on these findings and discuss them further with the career counsellor in a subsequent session. In these examples, the aim is for the client to (i) identify resources that may offer them career sustainability, (ii) consider how they can acquire these resources and accumulate them within a resource caravan, and (iii) identify opportunities to operationalise their resource caravan. Extreme weather events are often short-lived in duration but can have long-lasting impacts. Individuals should be encouraged to take proactive steps to acquire the necessary resources so that when a negative career shock occurs, these resources can be deployed in combinations that best serve the situation at hand. This can help individuals increase their resilience and manage stressful conditions [44], which is significant since the extended timespan of contemporary careers increases the likelihood of encountering chance events and career shocks [25].

The opportunities presented for career counsellors and their clients from the WCM address calls by Hughes et al. [6] to reframe career support in transformative ways. The WCM can help clients empower themselves to take ownership of their careers and adopt a growth mindset, increasing the likelihood of career sustainability and the associated outcomes of enhanced wellbeing, career satisfaction, and life satisfaction [27–29]. Furthermore, organisations benefit since a healthy and productive workforce offers a competitive advantage, increased productivity, and organisational sustainability [31,36]. The WCM could also be used by career counsellors to help organisations become aware of the need to create resource passageways to enable employees to mobilise their resource caravans [45]. This could take the form of a policy to provide career guidance, mentoring, or development opportunities for employees to facilitate them to grow and flourish [46]. The benefits at the individual and organisational levels subsequently extend to national economies and broader society by increasing tax revenues to fund future investment in services and infrastructure. This could also include investment in providing greater access to career counselling services for young adults or the unemployed.

### *5.3. Limitations and Directions for Future Research*

The drawing together of contemporary career theories as a theoretical framework and the conceptualisation of WCM reflects an embryonic foundation on which to build due to the absence of empirical data (which sits beyond the scope of this paper). However, the author has been able to draw on a decade of experience providing mentoring and career support to bridge theoretical and practical perspectives. Additionally, metaphors can influence perception and action concerning the framing and sense-making of one's

career, but they also risk narrowing one's field of focus [13,14,17–23]. This acknowledges concerns of an over-emphasis of the ability of an individual to demonstrate resilience and the need for organisational responsibility for the wellbeing of their employees [83]. Therefore, the WCM should be viewed as a tool within a toolbox that a career coach can use to facilitate a client to make sustainable and informed decisions about their career. The choice of weather elements and their descriptors should also change to demonstrate greater cultural sensitivity for clients from different countries where some of the weather elements described here might be absent, and others not listed here are preponderant. Thus, the WCM can be introduced by a career counsellor and subsequently developed by the client to address their specific needs. Previous research has shown that intervention is most likely to be effective if the career counsellor has used it to frame their own career before using it with their clients [84].

Future research can address these limitations by collecting empirical data to see how using the WCM in career counselling resonates with clients and provides them with an increased understanding of their careers. The WCM could be framed as a case study, for example, with a longitudinal study design employing quantitative questionnaires or qualitative interviews to collect empirical data before and after the WCM intervention. For example, Creed and McIlveen [85] propose a six-step method of metaphor identification from interview transcripts. The empirical findings could then validate, modify, or extend the WCM. An empirical investigation would also help progress sustainable careers beyond a dominant focus of conceptual publications (e.g., [2,31,35,36]).

Additionally, an opportunity exists for future research to capture the views of different stakeholders to understand areas of agreement and divergence. An example of a study using this approach is Donald et al. [5]; career counsellors and graduate recruiters were interviewed to capture their views of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the recruitment of graduates. Focus groups could be set up to explain the WCM approach and collect feedback. The focus groups could be conducted to facilitate comparison between different actors (e.g., cohorts of career counsellors versus cohorts of recruiters). The findings could help facilitate homogeneous communication and evolve the WCM to gain additional clarity on the practical benefits and limitations of the metaphor as presented in this paper.

## 6. Conclusions

This paper aimed to provide an accessible, flexible, and homogenised approach to career counselling and career development via the conceptualisation of a new metaphor in response to evolving careers and labour markets. The research question of 'How can Weather as a Career Metaphor (WCM) offer an accessible tool for career counsellors to use with their clients across their lifespans?' was addressed. Ten weather elements were presented, complemented by a discussion of how these elements can interact. The strength of the WCM comes from the integration of sustainable career theory and conservation of resources theory with the author's decade of experience providing mentoring and career counselling to individuals worldwide. The WCM offers a complementary tool as part of a more comprehensive toolkit for career counsellors to help their clients to understand potential challenges within contemporary labour markets. This facilitates individuals to take ownership of their careers, acquire personal resources, and take proactive steps to increase the likelihood of sustainable career outcomes playing out across their lifespans.

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