Lecture series SMACT 2023: Career Transitions

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Migration & career transitions

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Time schedule

Career Transitions Lecture

14:30 Welcome & introducing career transitions

14:45 Adjustment process: pre, during and post- career transition

15:30 Introducing a holistic checklist for understanding career transition processes

15:35 Short break 10 min

15:45 Introducing a holistic checklist for understanding career transition processes

15:55 Application to case studies

16:15 Group feedback

16:30 Summary & closing

About me: Research interests

- Began researching low socio-economic adolescents in South Africa, & how to faciliate work or higher education entry. Worked 10 years as a career counsellor.

- Moved to Switzerland as a post-doc, researched VET Swiss young people, and tracked the career resources longitudinally with career interventions.

- Developed an interested in career transitions, and began researching migration aspirations and motivations in South African University students.

- Involved in a SNSF project tracking career transitions longitudinally qualitatively with migrants, unemployed and individuals experiencing illness.

- Marie Curie Fellowship: researching migration differences in the career transition, gender, assigned versus self-iniated, work and non-work outcomes

SMACT Project overview

Mixed-method design

quantitative adjustment over T1, T2, T3 (work and non-work)

Qualitative interviews with female highly skilled migrants

https://www.smact.work/

The **Skilled Migrant Adjustment to Career Transitions (SMACT) Project** is an interdisciplinary examination of adjustment processes in multi-national skilled migrant workers to a single host country (i.e., Switzerland) in terms of their work-related and non-work outcomes. This research study is in line with European 2030 Strategy flagship initiatives of fostering employment and reducing poverty and social exclusion to address an existing gender dynamic and inform human resource management and career counselling practices.

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Migration & career transitions

Working with career transitions

Predominant career transitions researched

- School-to-work or to further training transitions
- Retirement transitions
- Job loss or retrenchment
- Career change
- Migration
- Illness and chronic illnesses
- Mental illnesses
- End of career transitions (i.e., army veterans, and athletes)
- Maintenance transitions ("internal" transitions)
- Advancement transitions (upward mobility)
- Entry or re-entry transitions
- Leave-or-seek transitions

Importance of career transitions

- Career transitions are currently being examined as markers of career path complexity
- Increased career transitions and viewed as contributors to creating precarious career trajectories.
- These distinctions are not easy to make, with career transitions often consisting of voluntary and involuntary components (Masdonati et al., 2017).
- There are also situation-bound factors that may severely limit the choice or agency that an individual has in navigating a transition (Blustein, 2019).
- long-term consequences, which depends on the transition success of the individual; and the outcome can affect an individual's long-term career path with increased psychological losses and less general psychological well-being (Paul and Moser, 2009)
- Research has shown that approximately 6 transitions occur in a lifetime.

Terminology: what concepts we use

- Career change verus career transition
- involuntary verus voluntary career transition
- Planned verus unplanned career transition
- Traditional ideas of a career trajectory as linear life stages versus multiple career changes and life-long learning to develop sustainable careers.
- We focus on identity development to enter into the world of work, but don't address identity loss and associated grief in other transitions.
- We focus on agency of individuals, but not on the costs of developing and maintaining these resources.
- We talk about context, but can only focus on the most important aspect that the individual presents, but it may be only a secondary concern.

Definitions of career transitions

- 'career transition' includes any career shifts in the same vocational field, whether it is upward or downward mobility, inter-organisational or intra-organisational transitions.
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- Typically, every individual will encounter predictable and anticipated (i.e., 'normative' transitions), as well as unpredictable and unanticipated (i.e., 'non-normative' transitions) (Schlossberg, 1984; Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004).

- The term 'transition' here as a verb to refer to the psycho-social processes and adaptations that an individual undergoes in facing an involuntary career and life change (Fournier et al., 2016).
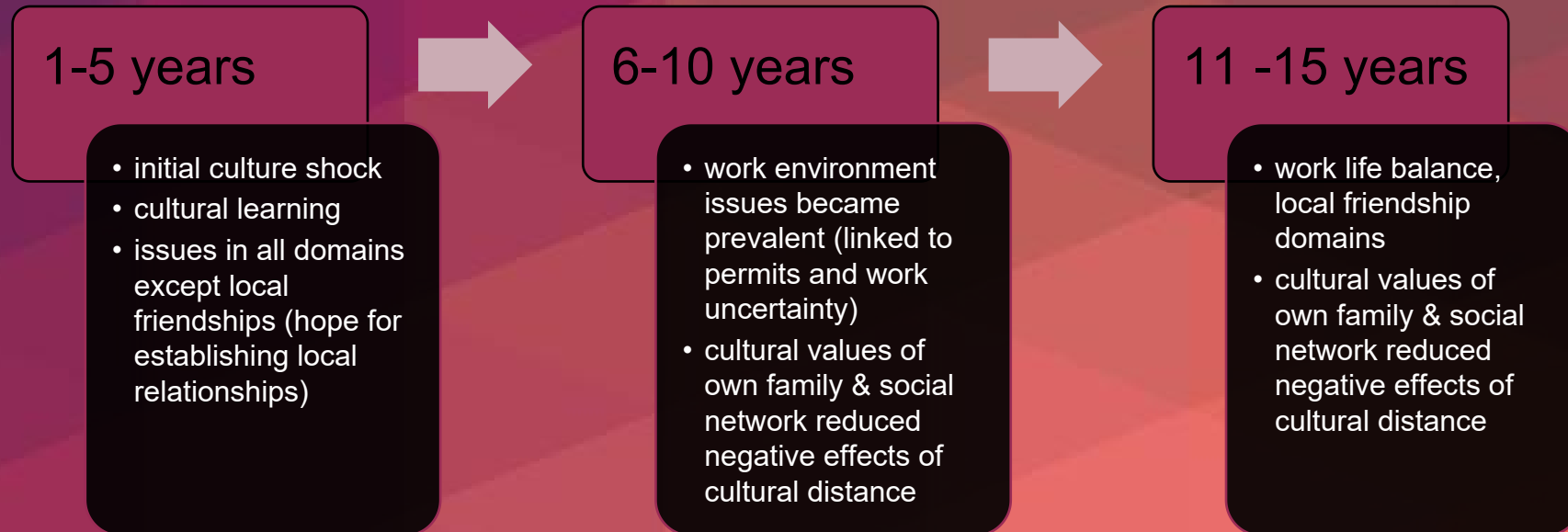
Career transition: Migration

- **Migrant groups include:** Assigned expatriate (AE), Self-initiated expatriate (SIE), Highly skilled migrant/ expatriate, Internationally mobile employee, Globally mobile worker, Foreign worker/ employee, Refugees & Aslyum seekers.

- Post- COVID-pandemic, we see in 2022 that the number of migrants worldwide is estimated at 281 million, of which **169 million are labour migrants** (IOM, 2022).

- Approximately **70,000 highly skilled adults** enter Switzerland every year, primarily for work reasons (D'Amato et al., 2019).

- **Migration holds challenges on different levels:**

  1. Individual (well-being, career transitions, work outcomes)
  2. Social (interaction, relationships)
  3. Organisational (work productivity, employee relationships)
  4. Structural (policy, legislation, management of migration flows)

Career transition: Migration

Discrimination occurs across this time frame, depending on country of origin (non-EU being the worst).

1-5 years

- initial culture shock
- cultural learning
- issues in all domains except local friendships (hope for establishing local relationships)

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6-10 years

- work environment issues became prevalent (linked to permits and work uncertainty)
- cultural values of own family & social network reduced negative effects of cultural distance

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11 -15 years

- work life balance, local friendship domains
- cultural values of own family & social network reduced negative effects of cultural distance

Albien, A.J., Hilpert, P., Rossier, J. & Ruedin, D. (submitted). Intentions to stay: Examining expatriate adjustment in a host country according to time-dependent factors and cultural distance. European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology.

Career transition: Migration

➢ **Adjustment terminology** is used interchangeably in the literature, and includes cross-cultural adaptation (Black & Stephens, 1989), expatriate adjustment (Hippler et al., 2014), and acculturation (Berry, 2006).

➢ The **extent of psychological (dis)comfort to a new cultural and work-related environment** is a key challenge of the migrant adjustment process (Black & Stephens, 1989) and is a **time-related** concept.

➢**Dimensions include:**
- Language
- Work environment
- Job or task characteristics
- Leisure time
- Urbanity
- Work-life balance
- Living quarters
- Family life
- Local friendships
- Contact to those left behind

Adjustment - Hippler et al., 2004

Was this change a positive (+), neutral (0), or negative (-) change?

Please consider your work/life in your home country (or last assignment) as compared to your current work/life now that you are on assignment. With respect to each of the items below, please check the box to the right of each item in which you have experienced a change or difference:

this change was very significant in my life (4)

this change was significant in my life (3)

this change was not too significant in my life (2)

this change was insignificant in my life (1)

Dimensions of career transitions

Voluntariness/Controllability: Extent to which the change is voluntary (e.g. self-determined occupational change versus occupational change due to accident or illness). (also keep in mind significance of change)

Radicality/Magnitude: Extent to which the new occupation is new compared to the old occupation (e.g., the use of previously learned knowledge and skills).

Ambiguity: understanding of concrete steps and solutions needed to resolve transitional adjustment issues (Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2008).

Reversability: Perception of whether the change is reversible or not.

Social desirability: status of previous job compared to new work.
(Zacher, 2017; 2019; Masdonati et al., 2019; Akkermans et al., 2018).
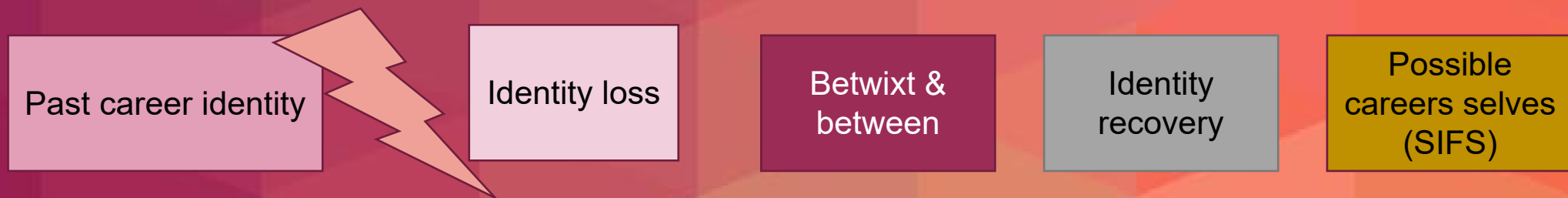
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Adjustment to career transitions

Identity Work : Recent studies define identity work as the commitment of people **to form, repair, maintain and strengthen or revise their identity** (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010).

Career change, as a transition between two role identities, provokes identity questions (Masdonati, 2019) and engages **a form of narrative identity work** (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Ibarra & Obodaru 2016; Kulkarni, 2019).

Process of identity loss and recovery

| Past career identity | Identity loss | Betwixt & between | Identity recovery | Possible careers selves (SIFS) |

Checklist: Career Transitions

- 1. Tease apart voluntary & involuntary dimensions
- 2. Subjective experience of career transition
- 3. Contextual resources and barriers
- 4. Discrepancies between ideal self & actual self
- 5. Identity threats: loss of value of an identity, loss of meaning & limiting beliefs
- 6. Grieving of former career & identity (process is personal and subjective)
- 7. Emotional regulation strategies
- 8. Openness to learning
- 9. Social support
- 10. Plan of action: concrete steps

(Conroy & O'Leary- Kelly, 2014; Higgins, 1987; Kulkarni, 2019).

Thank you