At-risk Swiss youth: An analysis of career adaptation, resilience and life satisfaction in adaptive readiness

Institute of Psychology, Work and Organisational Psychology

Dr. Anouk Jasmine Albien & Prof. Dr. Andreas Hirschi
124 October 2019, Copenhagen
Introduction: Relation to conference theme

- At-risk or vulnerable youth population groups have previously been found to be more likely to experience lower levels of life satisfaction, career resources and career adaptability, than their low-risk counterparts.
- Career model research that includes resilience as a mediator will enable the better prediction of the life course of youth in developmental jeopardy.
- As a result, more appropriate interventions can be designed to traverse increasingly complex career-life transitions, which is an important contribution to social justice practices.
Adolescent career development
School-to-work transition

- Adolescence is a **critical time** for development, career development included.
- **Readiness/maturity** to make career decision.
- Adolescents period has been **extended**, spending a longer time in education.
- **Life course perspective**, early career experiences influences future work experiences.
- Research that tracks development before, during and after a school-to-work career transition is **scarce**.

**Risk can be defined as:**
- Immigrant background
- Lower socio-economic background
- Maternal education level
- Family income

**Challenge:** How best to facilitate school-to-work transitions in a changing world-of-work.
Resilience is conceptualised as the **ability to handle stressful situations as** an adaptive response (Rossier, 2015).

The concept of resilience is built on the idea that individuals **exhibit positive adaptation** in the face of significant adversity or trauma (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000).

**Resilience has largely been overlooked** in career counselling research, theory and practice.

This research attempts to add to the slowly emerging research base that supports the development of strengths-based personal attributes **to help individuals overcome adverse work-life situations and stressors** (Richardson, 2002; Rutter, 2006).
Life satisfaction in adolescents

- is considered a **subjective evaluation** based on personal criteria of an individual’s **quality of life** (Schalok & Felce, 2004).
- As far as we are aware **hardly any studies exist** on vulnerable adolescent’s life satisfaction levels in conjunction with their career development,
- This underscores the relevance of this research to understand how at-risk youth **perceive their life satisfaction** and are able to explain their cognitive appraisal of stressors associated with their lived-experiences.
Career Adaptation Model

Emphasises the development of adaptive responses in career development (Savickas, Porfeli, Hilton, & Savickas, 2018)

- **adaptive readiness** (i.e., a personality trait implying a willingness and readiness to change)
- **adaptability resources** (i.e., a psychosocial construct that denotes self-regulation resources for dealing with change)
- **adapting responses** (i.e. the performance of actual behaviors that address changing career conditions and making occupational choices)
- **results of adapting responses** (i.e., the fit between the individual and occupation as indicated by success, satisfaction, and stability).
For example: an individuals’ adaptive readiness mobilizes his/her adaptability resources which shapes his/her adapting responses and ultimately produces adaptation results (Savickas et al., 2018).

Most relevant to the present research is the last two dimensions because we are examining how resilience mediates the relationship between adapting responses and adaptation results, (i.e., measured by life satisfaction & career resources).
SBFI project overview

This project is funded by the State Secretariat for Education, Research, and Innovation (SERI).

- **This four year project aims** to examine how adolescents become prepared for a **career before transitioning to vocational education and training (VET)**.

- We are interested in questions such as: 1) **who is more or less likely to develop career preparedness**, 2) **for whom is career preparedness more or less important**, 3) **the effect career preparedness has on work adjustment in VET and later professional development**, and 4) **how career preparedness can be enhanced by career guidance interventions**.

- **This project aims to identify the key factors that promote success** in the transition to VET and later work adjustment.
SBFI project overview

Career preparedness, Self-directed career management, career choice success

Work adaptation, job satisfaction, etc.

T1  T2  T3  T4  T5  T6  T7

8th grade  9th grade  1st year VET
Swiss VET System

• In Switzerland the majority of adolescents start with VET after lower-secondary level and qualifications are then obtained in upper secondary level (i.e., at age 15).

• Although this system has many benefits, it becomes a challenge to stay employable in the changing world-of-work due to the young age at which these individuals receive their VET qualification.

• Longitudinal study that consists of seven time points that enable career preparedness to be tracked in an adolescent sample over two years, ending in 2020 once they have entered into vocational education and training (VET).
Sample Description

- Eighth grade Swiss adolescents were recruited from 33 schools in the German-speaking regions of Switzerland.
- The focus of this research study is on cross-sectional data collected at $T_5$ (n=593; $M = 15.6$ years; $SD = .62$).

$T_5$: N=593, $M = 15.6$ years; $SD = 0.62$

**Female** (49.4%), **Male** (50.6%)

Swiss birth (73%) and non-Swiss (27.3%)

**Nationality:** Swiss (73.6%), Swiss Immigrant (7.7%), German (4.5%), French (6.8%).

30% VET Lehre (Father education) vs 20% mother education.

**Mom working** (50%) & **dad working** (90%).

**Completed 3-5 schnupperlehrer** (42%)

50% wrote between 1 and 4 **applications**

60% Received 1-2 **acceptanceS**, but 23% received no acceptance
Weisst du schon, was du nach der Oberstufe tun möchtest? - Selected Choice

- Ich möchte eine Lehre machen.
- Ich möchte eine weiterführende Schule besuchen (FMS, Gymnasium, etc.).
- Ich möchte das 10. Schuljahr besuchen.
- Ich weiss es noch überhaupt nicht.
- Anderes, nämlich:

Hast du bereits eine Lehrstelle?

- Ja
- Ich habe eine Lehrstelle gesucht, aber noch keine gefunden.
- Ich habe keine Lehrstelle gesucht.
Data collection

There were four measures used in this research study:

- The *Student Career Construction Inventory* (SCCI: Savickas *et al.*, 2018) consisting of 18 items of 4 dimensions (Crystallizing self-concept, exploring, deciding & preparing)
- *The Satisfaction with Life Scale* (Diener, Emmons, Larson & Griffin, 1985) a five item scale using a 5 Likert scale.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge &amp; Skills</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Occupational expertise</td>
<td>• Importance of work</td>
<td>• School support</td>
<td>• Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• VET market knowledge</td>
<td>• Confidence</td>
<td>• Family support</td>
<td>• Career Information gathering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Soft skills</td>
<td>• Clarity</td>
<td>• Friends support</td>
<td>• Self-reflection</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Career Resources Questionnaire (CRQ) (Hirschi et al., 2018)  
www.cresogo.com
Group comparisons

Comparing group means
1. Life satisfaction: Female mean scores were higher than males (p<.005)
2. Resilience scores: Female mean scores slightly higher than males (p=0.52)
3. SCCI Adapting responses: No significant group differences between males and females across 4 dimensions
4. No differences for CRQ

Swiss Birth
1. Life satisfaction: No significant group differences between Swiss and non Swiss
2. Resilience scores: No significant group differences
3. SCCI Adapting responses: No significant group differences
4. CRQ: No significant group differences
Correlations

- Gender correlated significantly ($p<.001$) with life satisfaction ($r = .13$)
- Resilience correlated significantly ($p<.001$) with life satisfaction ($r = .60$) & SCCI ($r = .47$)
- Life satisfaction correlated with SCCI ($r = .45$)
- High intercorrelations between SCCI dimensions ($r = .5$ to $r = .7$) used total

Correlations

- SCCI total correlated significantly with life satisfaction ($r = .45$) & resilience ($r = .47$).
- CRQ score correlated with SCCI total ($r = .68$), resilience ($r = .52$), & Life satisfaction ($r = .43$),
Expected Results

Mediation model 1

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<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>p-value</th>
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<td>0.01118034</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b 0.50</td>
<td>Aroian test: 8.93534103</td>
<td>0.01119151</td>
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<tr>
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Descriptive Statistics

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<td>2.90228</td>
<td>584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5TOTResilience</td>
<td>54.4816</td>
<td>10.54419</td>
<td>571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5TOTLifesat</td>
<td>19.7613</td>
<td>4.14954</td>
<td>574</td>
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</table>

SCCI → Resilience: 0.45*

Resilience → Life satisfaction: 0.47**

Life satisfaction → SCCI: 0.60**
Expected Results

Mediation model 2

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<tr>
<th>Input:</th>
<th>Test statistic:</th>
<th>p-value:</th>
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<td>( t_a ) 7.73</td>
<td>Sobel test: 6.99066576</td>
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<tr>
<td>( t_b ) 16.38</td>
<td>Aroian test: 6.98003542</td>
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<td>Goodman test:</td>
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Descriptive Statistics

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<th>Mean</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>T5SCCITotal</td>
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<td>584</td>
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<tr>
<td>T5CRQtotal</td>
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<td>T5T0Resilience</td>
<td>54.4816</td>
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<td>571</td>
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</table>

\[ r = 0.68^*\]

\[ r = 0.47^*\]

\[ r = 0.52^*\]
Next steps: Resilience levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resilience level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>low resilience</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>medium resilience</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high resilience</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
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<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>947</td>
<td>71.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1331</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Simple Error Bar Mean of T5TOTlifesat by Resilience level

Resilience level

Error Bars: 95% CI
Simple Error Bar Mean of T5SCCITotal by Resilience level

Error Bars: 95% CI
Expected Results

• The present study aims to examine whether resilience fully mediates the relationship between career adaptation responses and results, as measured by life satisfaction and career resources.

• It is expected that career adaptation responses influence resilience and that resilience leads to higher levels of life satisfaction experienced (Rossier, 2015) as well as the career resources that are developed.
Limitations & Future Implications

• Self-reported data & cross-sectional in nature
• More research needed on resilience & career resilience & CRQ
• Sample limitations
• Interventions are needed that address the constant adaptations required in world-of-work transitions for vulnerable adolescents or young people worldwide (Cohen-Scali et al., 2018).
Vielen Dank!

Thank you for your attention!

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24th October 2019, Copenhagen
How can Psychological Intervention and Career Counselling Respond to Uncertainty, Precarity and Unemployment’s Psychosocial Consequences?

Casanova, M.L.; Costa, P.; Lawthom, R. & Coimbra, J.L.
Main Goal

To explore how a group of psychologists discuss the implications of the results of a quantitative study that focused on the psychological consequences of unemployment, precarity and psychosocial uncertainty.

Quantitative data started to be collected in Portugal when the country was experiencing the first measures of austerity as a consequence of the financial crisis of 2007/2008.

Theoretical Background

New forms of subjective uncertainty (Marris, 1996) originated in socioeconomic, cultural and political dimensions:

- Globalisation
- Individualisation as the main form of socialisation (Bauman, 2001/2009)
- Individualism (Stiegler, 2004/2011) - distrust and competitiveness
- Neoliberalism: economic deregulation and devaluing of the welfare state (Bauman, 2001/2009; Lapavitsas, 2011)
- Unstable labour markets and job insecurity (Amundson, 2005; 2006; de Witte, Pienaar & de Cuyper, 2016; Sennett, 1992/2001; Tomasik & Silbereisen, 2016)

Uncertainty as a product of human action (Beck, 1992; Marris, 1996)

Marris (1996): Unequal distribution of the power to manage uncertainty – politics of uncertainty

Power/ability to cope with uncertainty depends more on circumstances/contingencies than on resources (or skills)
Method

• Psychologists that work in different areas of intervention were invited for a Focus Group Discussion

• A PowerPoint was prepared with some of the main results from the quantitative studies

• Final group composition (8 participants and pseudonyms):
  • 1 psychologist that works in the area of vocational and career guidance/counselling in Higher Education (Maria)
  • 1 psychologist that works in area of vocational and career guidance/counselling at a private school, from kindergarten to secondary school / representative of the Portuguese Professional Board of Psychologists (Joana)
  • 1 psychologist that works in area of vocational and career guidance/counselling at an institution of professional rehabilitation (Luísa)
  • 1 psychologist in the area of career management (Daniela)
  • 1 psychologist in the area of public and communitarian health at a public institution (Filipa)
  • 2 clinical psychologists (Manuel and Ana)
  • 1 psychologist that works in the area of work psychology and organisations / Human-resources at a private company (Isabel)
Research Questions

• How does this group of psychologists make sense of the results of the quantitative study?

• What do they consider their professional role to be?

• How does their perception of their role influence their practice?
Analysis

• Social constructionist approach: what are the discourses constructed by the participants (how language constructs social reality), and what purpose do they serve (Berger & Luckmann, 1966/2004; Gergen, 1995)

• Seeking to make a connection between their personal interpretation of results and the macro social, economic and political structures, and how they position their practice towards them

• Identify hegemonic discourses, how they may influence their practices within their areas of expertise, and their potential social and political effects (Foucault, 1986; Parker, 1998)

• Preliminary analyses will be presented

• Firstly, a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was performed in order to organize the data, to subsequently perform a discourse analysis (Parker, 2005) of the themes identified, focusing on power relations
Results and Discussion

Themes:

1) The origins of psychological ailments
   Allows us to understand how the participants attributed meaning to the results presented

2) The role of psychology in its various forms of practice
   Participants discuss their professional practice and role, how they perceive it regarding social justice, how they perceive the impact of practices on psychological well-being, personal agency and career development, and possible alternative strategies
Results and Discussion

1. Discourse of the labour market and Human Resources

2. Discourse the Social Context is an Aggressor
Results and Discussion - illustration

The origins of psychological ailments

1. Discourse of the labour market and Human Resources

(on the fact that unemployed people keep searching for a job in their area of training, sometimes investing in more training)

“Daniela: I feel I’m playing devil’s advocate, why? Because I work all these years in the area of career management and many times when a service user comes to me, I’m the one who has to say: “this...” [Ana says “Stop doing training!”] “this is unreal on your part”. Because I worked at Governmental Institution A, that gives me even more expertise to say that. When I’m doing counselling in the area of careers, people present a profile, that many times the profile is what’s unemployable. Many times this isn’t related to training. And care that I’m not talking about RSI’s [the name of a governmental survival benefit that could be translated to insertion social income], now I’m not talking about the governmental institution A, the employment services, that area dealing already with people who, simply, and I’m sorry for the truth, just don’t want to work.”
The origins of psychological ailments

2. Discourse the Social Context is an Aggressor

“Manuel: I think that we, as psychologists, we have a role that many times is a role that reproduces what is the aggression of society on the unemployed and I think that, sometimes, what we are talking about is, mostly when we work, also with our frustration and as professionals, mostly when we work in the areas of [career] guidance, the difficulty to direct people [to a job], which is the measure of our success, right? For someone who works at the Governmental Institution A, success is when you’re able to get someone a job position, I imagine. And that frustration, sometimes makes us have something which is dangerous. I think that, this study talks a lot about something which is... there is a logic of glorification of work. The crisis of 2009 made people believe that having a job was everything. And not having a job was almost, I would say, almost a moral criminalisation of the individual. And that was very, very much disseminated. Whether by political institutions and social institutions in 2009, whether by corporate institutions. And I think that is very evident. Well, all that fostered social exclusion of unemployed people. Which means, the unemployed, in that logic I was saying, since s/he is responsible for her/ his unemployment, and s/he is responsible in many ways, which is, we say: “s/he is responsible because s/he didn’t qualify adequately, s/he is responsible because s/he assumed expectations that were not realistic, as if the expectations that were not realistic were they who created out of nothing and what we know is that a person’s expectations are the ones society imposes, which are: to have a career, to have professional success, to have financial wellbeing, and so the person transports that, and that’s why they do PhD’s, transports this illusion, which isn’t a personal illusion, it’s a social one. And we all live that and, so, to make people believe that expectations are individual is a problem.”
Results and Discussion - illustration

The role of psychology in its various forms of practice

1. Discourse of the labour market and Human Resources

“Daniela: even with the governmental institution A or now, not being connected to the machine [governmental institution A], we know what is ideal and we try to do it. And now I’m going (to compare) Governmental institution A and the counselling I do. When I do career management, or any one of my colleagues, we analyse, there it is, we do the assessment/balance of people’s skills, we analyse their profile, and all this in career is marketing. That’s how I present it to people and that’s why we value people’s strengths from the start. And we do that through the CV and other employability tools. Of course this involves working with the person a life project. We do short, medium, long-term. This kind of accompaniment is possible to do at Institution X. And by doing this, we promote networking, through our workshops, not only personalized service, also because the person has to interact with others. Because loneliness is a constant. We have service users who tell us, “what’s your most serious problem?” and they say “it’s loneliness, yes. I feel lonely, other people don’t understand me” As incredible as that sounds, this is what I’m told, it’s not problems, it’s not more technical problems, it’s “I can't express myself to others; I can't make myself be understood; other people don’t understand me”. Then, of course, we are working all these themes because we also promote people’s psychological well-being. This, ideally, fortunately I can do this at Institution X when I do this project or design this intervention plan with the person. Governmental Institution A calls this a personal employment plan. What happens with the staff of the Governmental Institution A? We have a personal employment plan that was conceived by people who understand this area. That work in the area of psychology, sociology, work. And they would want, ideally, to do what, in some way, I, with more freedom can already do with the X City Hall. What’s keeping them? What prevents it? It’s the bureaucratic machine. I'm in front of a computer when I'm doing these sessions, and I'm being timed to do them in a specific amount of time.”
Results and Discussion - illustration

The role of psychology in its various forms of practice

2. Discourse the Social Context is an Aggressor

“In: Can psychologists have a role in intervention, whether vocational, clinical, organizational, communitarian, in training, and in the vocational dimension in general, and professional; what role can psychologists have to intervene on these dimensions [social dominance orientation; sociopolitical control; agency…]

Manuel: Oh, here we are confusing the role as a social being with the role as psychologist.

Inv: Is it?

Manuel: Yes. Although… obviously there are… going back to what I was saying before, obviously there is a dimension for personal and social well-being that is related to the connection with others and to having some control over what surrounds us, if nothing else, through political participation and through some kind of involvement in what is decided. I have a friend who said, one thing is to eat the soup, another is to participate in its making, right? And sometimes to pass that idea to people, that they have a chance to participate in the making of the soups they eat, right? [Ana says “People don’t have that perception.” Manuel: They don’t. It’s a lot to do also with what has been prepared for a long time, which is the logic of absolute individualism, in which people become autonomous units, completely closed, in other words, people who go out to work, come home, communicate through social networks, lose the habit of communicating with the other, right? Touch the other. And that is… which means they become much more vulnerable to this kind of situations. Now, I was saying… hum… the limit between what is the professional, right? Of psychology, that has as… its deontological ethic logic of not transmitting what are personal convictions, so that’s my limit, my limit goes till there.

Inv: That was not the question.

Manuel: It goes until the importance… it goes until the importance of saying: heee… there are… so, you have the possibility of having a participation that can also give meaning to life, for you to feel you know what is happening around you and that you can have an important role. That, I think is the role we can have, and it is even a role that from the psychological point of view is very important because it connects this person to other people. And there it is… it was… basically that’s it.”
Conclusions

Discourse of the labour market and Human Resources

• Reflects the neoliberal economy and focuses on the rules of the labour market, producing a prototype of the employable individual (proactive, adaptable, flexible...), worthy of success

• Avoids socio-political analyses of psychological ailments, individualising its origins

• Creates the image of the ones that are worthy of unemployment benefits, to demonstrate the uselessness of the welfare state, creating hatred against vulnerable social groups

• Contributes to the bureaucratisation of support services, in this case, employment services, transforming people into service users, professional experience into profiles, interaction with people into networking, being a worker into being an asset that must be marketized, life projects into action plans or personal employment plans, counselling into a timed routine of instrumental tasks...

• Devalues people’s vocational/professional projects, blaming them for not adapting to the needs of the market and instrumentalises people through the view that “all this in career is marketing”

• Prescribes career projects as if they were a fit all formula and transforms career counsellors into career managers, converting it into people’s management, seeking to fit the person to the market, to control her/his desires, to foster conformity, submission and normalisation
Conclusions

Discourse the Social Context is an Aggressor

• Stresses the social, political and economic roots of psychological ailments, seeking to analyse psychological and vocational/professional issues in its macrosocial environment.

• Challenges the individualisation of social problems, as removing the responsibility from governments for solving social problems such as unemployment or precarity, and pushing it to individuals, redirecting the blame to the ones who are not proactive, entrepreneur or adventurous enough.

• Considers the social construction of people’s expectations, aims, life projects and, so, people cannot be blamed for their responses to the ambivalent demands of the environment.

• Questions the social perception of the centrality of work, in the sense that it morally criminalises the unemployed, socially excluding them as citizens.

• Psychology and vocational and career counselling must not reproduce the aggression of the social context towards people, the image of the employable individual and must not promote the adaptation to a social, economic and political context that violates individual subjectivity but promote an awareness of this context.

• Starts to open the possibility of promoting people’s agency, no only individually, but also in terms of their relationship with the social and political context, empowering them to act on their social environment, in search for a more socially just society.
How can Psychological Intervention and Career Counselling Respond to Uncertainty, Precarity and Unemployment’s Psychosocial Consequences?

Casanova, M.L.; Costa, P.; Lawthom, R. & Coimbra, J.L.

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University students’ identity work in the context of making the most of their study time

Critical perspectives on agency and social justice in transitions and career development, 24 October 2019 Copenhagen

Toni Kosonen, University of Eastern Finland, toni.kosonen@uef.fi
Leena Penttinen, University of Jyväskylä
Johanna Annala, Tampere University
Marita Mäkinen, Tampere University

UEF // University of Eastern Finland
Outline

• Background of the study
• The perspective of students’ everyday
• Research aims
• Data
• Discursive-narrative approach

Preliminary findings:
• Approaches to making the most of one’s study time
• Failing to make the most of one’s study time
• Final thoughts
Background (1/2)

• Themes of study progress and duration have been pertinent topics in Finnish higher education policy and research discussions (e.g. Ahrio 2012)
• Recently, the discussions has picked up in the context of prolonging working careers in order to remain competitive internationally and 'save' the welfare state
• Additionally, Finnish HE policy discourse has very recently placed special emphasis on the quality of employment and ‘employability’ of the graduates (see e.g. Siivonen 2016)

• Together, the policy themes of study progress and employability highlight the significance of utilizing study time effectively and appropriately
Background (2/2)

• Much of the research discourse revolves around identifying and analyzing problems, 'problematic' groups (e.g. ‘at-risk’ students; Korhonen & Rautopuro 2018) and solutions to enhance, the one hand, study progress and success, and on the other hand, employability and career readiness

• Discourses establish moral orders where 'normal' and ideal students are distinguished from 'problematic' and 'at-risk' categories of students (cf. Ylijoki 2000)

• The study at hand also draws on discussions concerning temporalities in higher education (Bunn et al. 2018; Liao et al. 2013; Nielsen & Sarauw 2017; Ylijoki & Mäntylä 2003) to provide insight into the organization of students’ everyday life
The perspectives of students’ everyday life

• Our study adopts a critical approach to both various policy discourses as well as research discourses related to the question of making the most of one’s study time with the focus on students’ own responses to these various discourses from the perspective of their everyday lives.

• The focus is on the legitimation and identity work students do as they account for their everyday activities, as well as on
  – how academic studies are located and positioned in spatial and temporal terms in students' daily lives and their studies as a whole;
  – what significance, meaning and role they are given in relation to other activities like paid and voluntary work, leisure, social activities in the student community and beyond, extra-curricular activities etc.
Research aims

• The study investigates:
  – *How do Finnish university students respond to societal expectations related to managing and making effective use of their study time and their time as students in a broader perspective?*
  – *What kinds of discourses and discursive positions inform their identity work as they account for their everyday life activities as students?*
Data

• 28 thematic week calendar interviews with student in the end of the bachelor phase (≈ 3rd year) students (15 women, 13 men) representing different sets of ‘generalist’ fields of study:
  (1) cultural and social studies (with a majority of women in the data), and
  (2) computer sciences and information systems studies (with majority of men)

• Students were invited, first, to talk about the activities they engaged in during the previous week in study, work and leisure contexts (with the help of a week calendar sheet).

• Second, we probed particular themes of planning their use of time and social encounters during the week and within a longer time frame, as well as their ideas about their future careers and how their career considerations are present and inform their day-to-day activities.
Discursive-narrative approach

• The analysis focuses on how students account for engaging in various activities in their student lives in the interactive context of the interview.

• The interview is seen as an interactive site for the construction and performance of identities. It provides access to, or a windows into, on-going identity work that individuals are engaged with in various contexts of their lives (Bamberg 2011; Nikander 2012).

• As the interviewees tell about how they manage their studies and time, they simultaneously portray themselves as particular kinds of people and adopt (identity) positions culturally available for them.
 Approaches to making the most of one's study time

• The analysis resulted in identification of three positions that organise and orient students’ identity work in the context of making sense of, and accounting for their everyday activities and use of study time.

• These are referred to as:
  (1) the practical-instrumental position,
  (2) the academic expertise building position, and
  (3) the competence and career building positions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The practical-instrumental position</th>
<th>The academic expertise building position</th>
<th>The competence and career building position</th>
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<tr>
<td>Draws upon and responds to current societal discourses emphasising <em>fast completion of studies and transitioning to working life</em> (with 'faith' in the promise of education as a guarantee for employment)</td>
<td>Draws upon and responds to discourses emphasising <em>&quot;traditional&quot;</em> academic virtues of deep learning and immersion into the subject matter as well as academic and professional integrity</td>
<td>Draws upon and responds to discourses emphasising becoming <em>&quot;employable&quot;</em> and becoming to possess <em>&quot;entrepreneurial&quot;</em> qualities of an ideal employer</td>
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<td>These discourses give legitimacy to a 'completionist' stance to studies, studies are given a distinct limited role in a student's everyday life</td>
<td>Narratives of grasping the academic ethos, studies are given a distinct, but central role in one's everyday life</td>
<td>Portrayals of oneself as a flexible expert and networker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying is defined as <em>'going to school'</em> which is distinguished from other activities, like social ones</td>
<td>Immersiveness of studies; studies are given priority (cultural idea of self-sacrifice in pursuit of knowledge?)</td>
<td>Everyday life activities, including studies and social activities, are approach from a perspective of building work-life relevant know-how and competences as well as networks; no clear distinction between studies and activities outside studies</td>
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</table>
| Distance is taken from academically oriented student types and identities; striving for academic excellence is portrayed as impractical, compromising living and welfare for the sake of studying, and essentially as 'waste of time' | Studying is defined in terms of becoming an expert in one's discipline and a member of a academic/professional community | Instrumental approach to student sociality – defined as *'networking'*
| | Distance is taken from merely 'completionist' orientations to studies; emphasises on academic/professional ethics and integrity | Distance is taken from the *'ordinary'* orientations, both from academic and 'completionist' orientations |
### The practical-instrumental position

**A practical approach to ‘school’, positioning pursuit for academic excellence as ‘waste of time’:**
Even if education is important to me, I have never been a straight A student, because I find that it’s almost useless. I rather live the kind of life I like and get worse grades [laughs]. So, this is the mindset through which I prioritise school things. And then, for instance, I consciously avoid stress. (F cult)

### The academic expertise building position

**Immersive experience (‘timeless time’):**
I really don’t remember anything. I have been lost in thought and written it. There hasn’t been anything else: the bachelor thesis has been constantly in my mind, even when I have not been doing it. The thought process has been going on. (M cult)

**Grasping the academic ethos:**
[This degree programme] felt a little indefinite initially. Because […] with an Art Education major […] there is no specific profession to which you’ll graduate. But when I got past that thinking, it’s the subject matter [in itself] that has become the thing that motivates me. (F cult)

**Distancing from merely ‘completionist’ orientation:**
For instance, if you do a translation, you have to do a lot yourself: you cannot use Google Translate and then work on that. I think that courses should not come as given, you should work on them. (F lang)

### The competence and career building position

**Taking distance from the ‘ordinary’ student mindset, and from both ‘completionist’ and academic approaches to studies:**
[You] need to try to keep your focus on a bigger whole. Not just thinking that now I have to submit these assignments, rather thinking [that] now I need to get this know-how, I might need it in the future.

It’s funny how usually people worry about that their life won’t be enjoyable or that they won’t get a partner or kids. My biggest worry is that I will be nothing. That’s why I am working on it all the time, accumulating all kinds of capital. (F cult)

**Networking:**
[I will achieve my goals by] studying and making progress. And then by networking. For me it’s like… I like to expose myself to things, and be active, all the time in every little thing, show my face everywhere, and network actively. […] (M IT)

### A few examples…
Failing to make the most of one's study time (1/2)

• This part not figured out yet...

• Failure is individualised:

  Interviewer: Ok. What do you think: would you like to have someone around who could help you?

  No, not really. I think that if I have problems with these things, it’s my fault. I should be able to sort things out myself. I don’t feel like bothering anyone with my problems. (M IT)
Failing to make the most of one's study time (2/2)

• A psychologized or psychopathological frame gives legitimacy to failure to respond to expectations – an identity category?

But then it’s not the end of the worlds, because I know I will get the credits in the end. I have had to…. When I was suffered a burnout in upper secondary school, since then I’ve had to listen to myself and take into account my strenghts. Because it does not benefit anyone, especially not yourself if you burn out and cannot do anything for a moment. Then I’ve had to just listen to it and not to demand so much of myself.
Final thoughts

• The analysis provides insight into how students negotiate their day-to-day lives in relations to various societal and cultural pressures
• Provides insight into how studies become positioned in students’ lives
• The discourses around ‘employability’ seem to be internalised by number of students across disciplines in our data
• These discourses seem to be adopting a hegemonic position across disciplines – being ‘academic’ is problematised and becomes to be seen as a thing of the past
References


- Nielsen, G. B., & Sarauw, L. (2017). Tuning up and tuning in: How the European bologna process is influencing students’ time of study. In *Death of the Public University?: Uncertain Futures for Higher Education in the Knowledge Economy* (pp. 156–172).


