

Universal wiggling? Perceptions of the career field at different points in time – an empirical study.

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Introduction

Careers: Jaunty dancing or exhausting wiggling?

Does it matter at which (st)age and in which time
you dance/wiggle?

Research Questions



- How do career stages and general career context influence perceptions of core dimensions of the career field?
- Do the effects of general career context and career stages interact?

Theoretical background



Career stages

- Entry career stage
- Main career stage
- Late career stage

General career context

- Stable career context
- Transitory career context
- New career context

X

Core dimensions of the career field

- Reliance
- Independence
- Changeability

Hypotheses: Career stages and career field



- H1a: Perceived career reliance is highest in the main career stage, lower in the entry and lowest in the late career stage.
- H1b: Progressing career stages lead to higher perceived independence.
- H1c: Perceived changeability is lower in the entry than in the main or late stage

Hypotheses: General career contexts and career field



- H2a: Career reliance is lower in the transitory career context than in a stable or new context.
- H2b: More recent career contexts lead to higher perceived independence.
- H2c: More recent career contexts lead to higher perceived changeability.

Hypothesis: Interaction effect between career stages and career contexts



- H3: In more recent career contexts the effect of career stage on perceptions of the three core dimensions of the career field decreases.

Sample

Vienna Career Panel Project (*ViCaPP*): career development of three cohorts of business school graduates (1970, 1990, 2000).

1970: n = 111 87% male, 62 years ± 3.8

1990: n = 250 62% male, 42 years ± 3.3

2000: n = 246 56% male, 33 years ± 2.4

(70 90 00)	Career context			Σ
	Stable (1970-1985)	Transitory (1986-1995)	New (1996-2005)	
Entry (1-5)	521	1039	210	2546
Main (6-20)	1114	540	1611	3427
Late (21-30)		566	518	1084
Σ	1636	2302	3119	7057

Measures

Coupling

Security and calculability of career-related prospects (*very secure* to *very precarious*)

How easily another adequate job could be found should the need arise (*very easily* to *not at all*)

Career reliance (-)

Subjection of career-related prospects to specific external actors and/or constraints (*very dependent* to *completely independent*)

Career independence

Configuration

Changeability of work content (*very stable* to *ever-changing*)

Changeability of professional relations (*very stable* to *ever-changing*)

Career changeability

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Method

(PCA to explore/replicate the factor structure)

Mixed linear models for career reliance, independence, and changeability.

Hypothesis testing with one fixed effect (career stage and/or career context) and an AR(1) term for the job years per subject.

Mean estimates on following slides via models with two fixed effects (career stage and career context) and an AR(1) term for the job years per subject.

AR(1) term was significant in all instances, $\rho \sim 0.9$

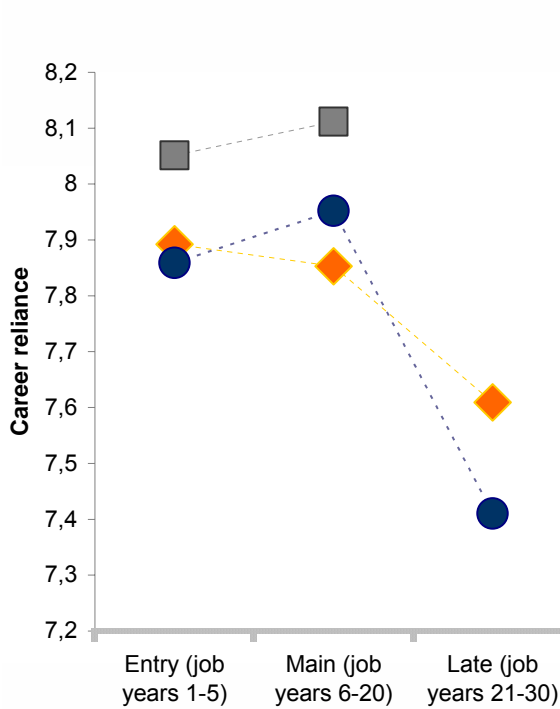
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Results: career reliance



- Stable (1970-1985)
- ◆--- Transitory (1986-1995)
- New (1996-2005)

Career context **/ns

	Transitory	New
Stable	**	**
New		

+: p < .1 * : p < .05 ** : p < .01 *** : p < .001

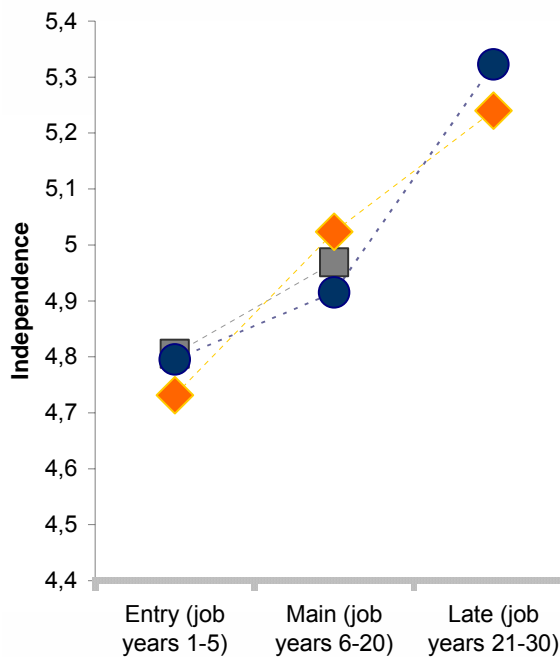
Career stage **/**

	Main	Late
Entry		***
Late	***	

+: p < .1 * : p < .05 ** : p < .01 *** : p < .001

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Results: career independence



- Stable (1970-1985)
- ◆--- Transitory (1986-1995)
- New (1996-2005)

Career context ns/ns

	Transitory	New
Stable		
New		

+: p < .1 * : p < .05 ** : p < .01 *** : p < .001

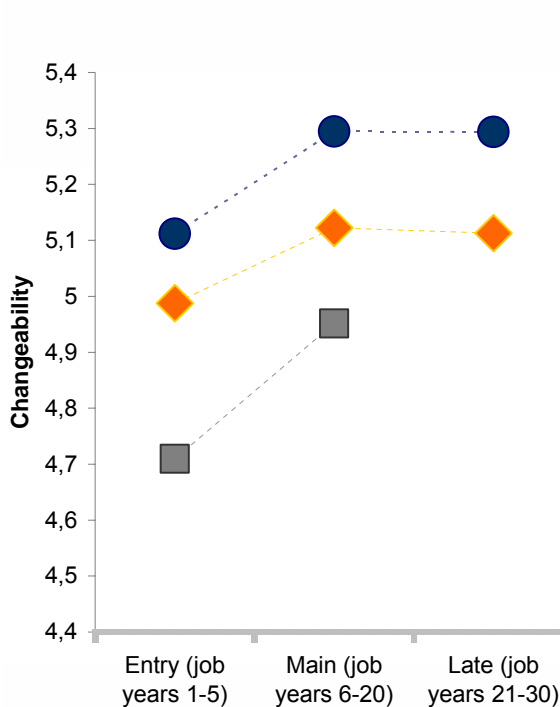
Career stage **/**

	Main	Late
Entry	*	**
Late	+	

+: p < .1 * : p < .05 ** : p < .01 *** : p < .001

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Results: career changeability



- Stable (1970-1985)
- ◆ Transitory (1986-1995)
- New (1996-2005)

Career context **/**

	Transitory	New
Stable		**
New	*	

+: p < .1 * : p < .05 ** : p < .01 *** : p < .001

Career stage **/**

	Main	Late
Entry	**	
Late		

+: p < .1 * : p < .05 ** : p < .01 *** : p < .001

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Limitations



- Small effect sizes (figures show 1/11 of the scale range)
- No “proper” longitudinal design
- Retrospective data collection (1970s and 1990s)
- Measurement of reliance, independence and changeability (single or dual item measures)
- Arbitrary and raw categorisation of career stage and context

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Discussion

- Career reliance
 - Career stages important predictor
 - Issues of career context: transitory vs. new context
- Independence
 - Effects of career stage
 - No effects of career context
- Changeability
 - Increased perceived changeability in later career stages: two ways to look at
 - Increased perceived changeability in more recent career contexts
- No interaction between career stages and career context
- Models including gender: no significant predictor



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Implications

- Changing career landscape affects different dimensions of career in different ways
- Role of career stage and general context? (For our sample and our dimensions: modest but significant influence.)
- Brave new career world? (More changeability, less reliance, no increase in independence.)

Nonetheless:



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Happy wiggling!

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