

Improving Career Transition Success

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Declaration

This thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution. The work is predominantly that of the Master of Philosophy candidate. Components of the thesis that involved collaboration have been noted as such. The Macquarie University Ethics Committee approved the research reported in this thesis on the 15th of May 2012 (ref: 5201200225).

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Summary

In the current volatility of Western economies, organisational restructuring and redundancy have become a common experience for many employees, including those in managerial and executive roles. In many organisations employees are provided with outplacement services to help them navigate their career transition effectively and find a new role as quickly as possible. Using a mixed methodology, this set of three studies seeks to confirm key factors contributing to a successful career transition. An original career transition model and new measurement tools have been developed to evaluate the role of these factors. The findings presented here contribute to enhancing the quality of career transition for employees affected by redundancy. The results also suggest ways to support the work of outplacement consultants, by providing guidance on effective strategies to navigate this uncomfortable yet valuable experience.

General Introduction

The employment landscape has changed with job loss and retrenchment becoming more prominent in the life course of employees. The subjects of this enquiry are the differential impact of the challenge this poses and the opportunity it represents to retrenchees, and to those whose job it is to ease their transition back into employment. Recent developments in the global economy have resulted in the highest rate of unemployment in some parts of the world since the Great Depression of the 1930's (Chen & Lim, 2012). This is due to factors such as the emergence of the knowledge economy, globalisation and increased global mobility, ongoing economic restructuring, technological innovation and an ageing workforce and population (Willis & Anderson, 2006). In Australia, a recent Bureau of Statistics survey painted a picture of a labour market far more turbulent than the official employment numbers suggest (Martin, 2013). Australians who have been in their jobs for five years or more are in the minority: the latest comprehensive survey of labour mobility found that 56 % of Australia's 11.5 million workers have been in their jobs fewer than five years, and 20% have been in their jobs less than a year. While total employment is said to have grown 77,600 in the year to July 2012, a glance beneath the surface reveals that about a fifth of the country's workers – 2.3 million people – have gained and lost jobs (ABS, 2012).

Organisations and individuals need to respond to this changing economic and employment landscape. In the present thesis, these organisational and individual responses are explored. At the organisational level responses include increasing productivity, often resulting in frequent restructures such as significant offshoring initiatives, with concomitant headcount reductions in the form of retrenchments. However, organisations have also responded by increasing the career transition support or the outplacement services that they provide to employees.

Outplacement is the process of encouraging and enabling people who are facing redundancy to cope with their job loss and find a new position. It is usually funded by the retrenching organisation. Outplacement purports to reduce the impact of job loss on the individual (Arslan, 2005), speed the process of reemployment, and decrease the likelihood of lawsuits targeting the downsizing organisation (Westaby, 2004). However, the outplacement process is understudied. As growing numbers of individuals are receiving outplacement services there is a need to demonstrate the individual aspects of outplacement support that, from an individuals' perspective, are most effective and helpful (Wanberg & Hough, 1996, Martin & Lekan, 2008).

Apart from financial distress (Doherty & Tyson, 1993), the differential impacts and significance of retrenchment are, in part, shaped by how central work is to an individual's life (Noer, 1993). Well-documented negative impacts include the destruction of existing habits, the loss of social support networks (Parker, Chmiel & Wall, 1997; Ryan & Macky, 1998), grief as well as anger (Shaw & Barrett-Power, 1997), stigma, and loss of self-esteem and professional identity. Some individuals respond to retrenchment as a 'blessing in disguise' (Zikic & Klehe, 2006). While they view job loss as a negative life event, they also appreciate it as an opportunity to improve their career prospects and change their life's direction. Thus, the ostensibly similar experience of 'job loss' impacts people differently. Many go through an identity shift as well as coming to terms with a changed employment market. To assist outplacement participants in making these shifts, outplacement firms provide them with up-to-date job and economic market information. As a result of shifts in the market, some participants will need to change their conception of work to align with a changing job market and career landscape.

In conjunction with economic changes, there has been a move from careers typically involving linear, life-time and company-centred employment, to careers that

are characterised by inter-organisational and vocational mobility (Arthur, 1994; Hall & Moss, 1998; Haynie & Shepherd, 2011). In this changing world of work, the traditional ‘gold-watch’ values of “mutuality and reciprocity” have been replaced by a “jobs-for-now culture” (Doyle, 2000, p.570). Individuals are now required to foster a form of self-responsible career management by maintaining a “calculative and instrumental relationship” with their work, independent from traditional organisational career arrangements. In taking ownership of their own careers and engaging with this new contract concerned with independent rather than organisational goals, individuals are able to generate “personalised employability” (Capelli, 1999; Clarke and Patrickson, 2007). For outplacement participants who have not recently experienced job searching, adapting to this changed employment landscape requires focus and effort. Individual differences in response to job loss, outplacement, conception of work, and the changing nature of careers and work, are the focus of the present study.

Individual differences in coping with retrenchment

Gowan and Nassar-McMillan, (2001) argue that job-search and job loss research suggest that individual differences may explain why not all job seekers engage in the same activities to seek employment and evidence shows differential effects for reemployment (e.g. Kinicki, 1989; Phelps & Mason, 1991; Scwab, Rynes, & Aldag, 1987). Similarly, outplacement services, while equally available for use, may not be used equally or result in equal outcomes if used by individuals.

To explore individual differences in job-search behaviour, in coping with job loss and in responses to an outplacement context, we had two main research objectives: 1) To determine the key factors that underpin positive experience of career transition following redundancy and, 2) To provide the outplacement industry with evidence-based knowledge about that process and tools to enhance outcomes for outplacement participants.

The specific focus for two of the three studies presented here stems from research by Moorhouse and Caltabiano (2007), who found that resilient unemployed Australians experienced less depression than less resilient individuals, even though they had been job-searching for a long time. Resilience has been examined in the context of adversity or trauma with various populations, but not in the context of unemployment. We were interested in the role that resilience might play in the context of redundancy followed by outplacement. Thus, the first study in this series examined whether retrenched individuals who were more resilient might cope better with career transition than less resilient individuals as measured by assertive job seeking. In this study, both psychological and physical well-being were measured with social support and general self-efficacy included as control measures.

Moorhouse and Caltabiano (2007) recommended that job-search providers participate in research to determine whether their programs also include psycho-social benefits to participants, such as the development and maintenance of resilience. They also suggested that “future research be first qualitative and then longitudinal” (p.123). Other researchers investigating well-being during unemployment also argue that not enough is known about how individuals cope with job loss, how different forms of coping may be differentially helpful, and why two individuals facing the same circumstances during job loss may appraise their situation differently (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg & Kinicki, 2005). These authors also argue that “the benefits of qualitative examinations of coping during unemployment should not be overlooked” (p.70). These recommendations informed the second qualitative study presented here, exploring individuals' subjective experience of outplacement along with the different uses and impacts of outplacement.

In the second study, we asked two questions: What factors contribute to optimal career transition, and what should outplacement providers offer to optimise participants'

experience of career transition? To answer these questions, ten outplacement participants were interviewed to discover how they defined the key components of career transition and also what helped them to navigate their transition from one role to the next. By determining these components, we were able to outline a Career Transition Model (CTM) and suggest how outplacement professionals could maximise their support to help participants achieve successful career transitions. We also proposed that the features that contribute to a positive progression through career transition could be captured in a construct we called Re-employability Esteem (RES). RES is a proactive and emotionally positive attitude characterised by a clear and agentic vision of one's career and life.

The third study was designed to better understand the constituents of RES as a key factor of career transition (CT) success. To do this, outplacement participants were asked to complete a survey measuring their experiences of different features of CT. A Principal Component Analysis was conducted and an RES scale developed. On the basis of previous research and the findings from the second study, the researchers also suggested that one of the variables underpinning successful career transition was Psychological Mindedness (PM). PM is a cognitively-toned personality factor defined as “a willingness to try to understand self and others, a belief in the benefits of discussing one's problems, openness to new ideas, and access to one's feelings” (Conte, Ratto, & Karasu, 1996, p. 251). General self-efficacy and resilience were included in this study to explore the different impacts of PM and these variables on career transition. Finally, from Study two, we inferred that an individual's conception of work would have different impacts and significance on their career transition experience. To measure this, a Conception of Work (CW) scale was developed and included as one of the main study variables.

Applying different research perspectives

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) define mixed methods research as “the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study” (p. 17) and they suggest that the research method should follow the research question in a way that “offers the best chance to obtain useful answers” (p. 18). The research questions examined here necessitated the use of a mixed methods approach. The first and third studies are quantitative as they involve theory/hypothesis testing, explanation, prediction, standardised data collection, and statistical analysis. The second study is qualitative, using a Grounded Theory approach, as the aim of this study was to explore participants' subjective experience of career transition and outplacement. A qualitative approach was preferred as it allows for a rich, detailed and personal understanding and description of these complex experiences. Further, qualitative data, in the form of the words used by the study participants, lend themselves to exploring how and why phenomena occur and allow the development of theory that can subsequently be tested.

Sample demographics

The participants in the studies presented here are, for the most part, recipients of outplacement services. They are predominantly from large corporate organisations, mostly from managerial and professional occupational status; they are well-educated and financially secure. This group of higher status professionals represents a rarely examined group of unemployed (Zikic & Klehe, 2006). A better understanding of career transition for this group is important because their careers may be significantly and negatively impacted by interruptions and subsequent underemployment. The unemployment literature has often focused on the importance of job-search, and finding a new job as the key goal of the unemployed. However, higher status professionals often find themselves underemployed in their new jobs (Feldman & Leana, 2000). They

work at lower levels, are paid less than in their previous jobs, and can experience a step downwards in their careers and thus, recommence the cycle of job-search (Kinicki, Prussia, & McKee-Ryan, 2000).

Study 1: A study of resilience and coping with job loss in an outplacement context

Introduction

Unemployment has been shown to have a profound effect on the life of the unemployed individual and his/her family (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki's, 2005; Vinokur, Price & Caplan, 1996). Job loss ranks in the upper quartile of life events that generate stress and is one of the top 10 traumatic life experiences (Moorhouse & Caltabiano, 2007). Unemployed workers may "suffer feelings of grief and guilt, loss of self-esteem, loss of identity, and loss of social support ... unemployed workers have been observed to have higher levels of depression, anxiety, and physical illness" (Brewington and Nassar-McMillan, 2000, p.4). There is a need to minimise these adverse impacts of unemployment, particularly with the worldwide increase in unemployment since the Global Financial Crisis, and growing numbers of individuals reporting changing jobs frequently.

The focus of the current study, the first of three in an integrated program of research, is on one type of job loss, retrenchment, which refers to the forced lay-off of employees by a firm, usually to cut down its payroll. In Australia, in February 2010 there were 693,300 unemployed people, of whom 273,000 (or 39.4%) had become involuntarily unemployed in the past two years. These people who 'lost' their jobs due to economic (or performance) reasons are contrasted with people who voluntarily 'left' their job (Jarvis, 2010). An earlier report of retrenchments in Australia (Buchanan et al., 1992) noted that: "Even in periods of employment growth the flow of retrenchments is considerable. There is, therefore, a need for a continuing focus on retrenchment assistance throughout the business cycle, even though the type of assistance required may vary" (p.2).

While retrenchments have become more common, job loss continues to be a traumatic event for many, with executives in particular, suffering a tremendous sense of loss of professional status, social support from colleagues and self-worth following their termination of employment (Feldman & Leana, 1994). A common organisational strategy for dealing with retrenchment is outplacement or career transition support. This is the process of encouraging and enabling people who are facing redundancy to cope with their job loss and find a new position. Outplacement is thought to be a useful tool to help employees cope with job loss (Arslan, 2005; Westaby, 2004). However, the outplacement process is understudied and while research in general may show that outplacement helps improve the morale of unemployed individuals and increase reemployment, there may be individual aspects of outplacement support and individual firms that are more or less effective (Wanberg & Hough, 1996, Martin & Lekan, 2008).

One of the most commonly cited benefits of outplacement is that it helps individuals improve their self-esteem as they adjust to their new status as unemployed (Wanberg & Hough, 1996). In this way, outplacement potentially improves individuals' resilience, defined as the ability to 'bounce back' from adversity (Luthans, 2002). Rutter (1993) argues that resilience is not a fixed characteristic of individuals, but that it changes with developmental life experiences and is dependent on risk factors (e.g. lack of education), adversity (e.g. job loss), and the social environment (e.g. personal and professional social networks). Bonanno (2004) suggests that resilience comprises multiple pathways including hardiness, self-enhancement and positive emotions, which can help individuals to thrive when confronted by adversity. By implication, individual responses to adverse events will depend on a number of factors, including the nature, intensity and length of exposure to demonstrable risk(s), and the psychological and social resources at the individual's disposal (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg & Kinicki, 2005).

Consistent with Bonanno's (2004) emphasis on the role of positive emotions in resilience, Mckee-Ryan et al., (2005) argue that the job-loss literature incorporates more negative than positive variables and that research should include positive affect outcomes and examine a broader range of well-being factors that are potentially relevant to resilience. In addition, despite Wanberg, Glomb, Song and Sorenson's (2005) call to investigate different variables that may predict persistence in job-search, few studies have examined resilience as a variable that could improve understanding of the retrenchment and reemployment processes. Moorehouse and Caltabiano (2007) note that, while "research has provided a better understanding of the protective factors that foster resilience in children, adolescents and older adults, there is a noticeable lack of research on resilience with the unemployed" (p. 115).

The present study is designed to examine resilience as a variable that could be associated with improvements in the effectiveness and persistence of job-search in an outplacement context. We also expect that the results of this study will provide the basis for improvements in outplacement services by guiding the design of useful and targeted outplacement interventions. We will define and discuss the concepts that support the notion that most adults engage in both career transition and career change by developing coping responses and behaviours (Dix & Savickas, 1995). These include resilience, social support, general self-efficacy, general well-being and assertive job-search behaviours. Following Masten's (2001) recommendation for the design of resilience studies, we examine the linkages between *risk events* (retrenchment), *predictors* (social support, general self-efficacy and resilience) and *positive outcomes* (positive general well-being and assertive job-search behaviours).

The challenges of retrenchment

Retrenchment occurs when an employee's job is no longer available and the employer either cannot offer the employee an alternative position, or not one that is

acceptable to the employee. The effect of retrenchment on retrenchees has been well documented and can include the destruction of existing habits, the loss of social and support networks (King, 1996; Parker, Chmiel & Wall, 1997; Ryan & Macky, 1998), financial distress (Doherty & Tyson, 1993), anger and grief (Shaw & Barrett-Power, 1997), stigma, the loss of working identity and self-esteem (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). On the other hand, some individuals live the experience positively, as a ‘blessing in disguise’ (Bennett, Martin, Bies, & Brockner, 1995; Zikic & Klehe, 2006).

Coping with retrenchment has become even more challenging in the current career landscape where 'work', 'job' and 'career' are being radically redefined (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008). Rather than ‘steady state’ and ‘linear’ careers (Driver, 1982), where success is conceptualised as vertical and hierarchical advancement within a single firm, employees must be sensitive to the “opportunities that go beyond any single employer” (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996, p. 116) by maintaining a mobile, “calculative and instrumental relationship” with their employers (Doyle, 2000, p. 579). To properly integrate the change and variance of the boundaryless and ‘jobs-for-now structure and culture’, employees are required to periodically reshape and resize their career path and identity “into a coherent self-picture” (Mirvis & Hall, 1994, p. 367). For displaced employees, finding a new life and job, particularly under such circumstances, can pose significant adaptive challenges that may strain an individual’s ability to cope (Armstrong, Galligan & Critchley, 2011).

While research has shown that, in a job loss context, employees’ initial reaction is often negative (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008), other findings show that positive appraisal of job loss and employability is linked to adaptive job-search behaviours and successful reemployment (Leana & Feldman, 1990; Leana et al., 1998; Wanberg, 1997). According to Lazarus & Folkman’s (1984) Interactional Theory of Coping, stress results when an individual appraises an event as taxing or exceeding the available

resources and threatening well-being. This appraisal, together with the availability of coping resources, leads to the development of coping strategies which affect both the emotional reactions to and the behavioural outcomes of the experience. Appraisals include *primary appraisal*, the process of perceiving a threat to oneself, and *secondary appraisal*, the process of evaluating one's personal coping resources in response to the threat. Primary and secondary appraisals are interlinked because demands cannot be measured independently of an assessment of coping resources. Thus, an individual's appraisal of his/her job loss will be linked with an appraisal of personal current employability (coping resource). Resilient individuals tend to appraise stressful events in an optimistic, zestful, and energetic way, are curious and open to new experience, and are characterized by highly positive emotionality (Block, & Kremen, 1996; Klohnen, 1996). Therefore, we anticipate that, in response to the stress of job loss, these individuals will show higher levels of assertive job seeking and well-being that is generally reflective of adaptive coping.

Who weathers retrenchment well? Possible protective factors

Resilience. Resilience has been variously defined as a fixed, stable personality trait with a strong genetic influence; as a dynamic process that can start at any given moment in life, or even a mix between the two (Portzky et al., 2010). The term 'resilience' has generally been used to connote "emotional stamina" and "describe persons who display courage and adaptability in the wake of life's misfortunes" (Wagnild & Young, 1993, p.166). These researchers identified two factors which reflect this resilient approach to stress. *Personal Competence* includes self-reliance, independence, determination, mastery, resourcefulness, and perseverance. *Acceptance of Self and Life* includes adaptability, balance, flexibility, and a balanced perspective of life and reflects acceptance of life events and a sense of peace in spite of adversity. According to the protective factor model of resilience (O'Leary, 1998), resilient

attitudes and personal competence are protective factors that reduce the likelihood of negative outcomes and often promote successful transition through adversity (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Individuals who possess these resilient qualities and positive orientation are able to modulate extreme responses to adversity and positively reconstruct their life position while remaining psychosocially involved (Demos, 1989). Rather than ascribing control to external sources, resilient individuals acknowledge with Frankl that the indomitable human spirit is “to choose one’s attitude to any given circumstance, to choose one’s way” (Frankl, 1984, p.86).

What makes resilience relevant to study in this context is that, while it has received less attention in career transition, a number of closely associated constructs have been examined and shown to be linked to desirable job-search behaviours and outcomes (Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001). For example, Fugate, Kinicki and Ashforth (2004) have shown that resilient individuals have positive self-evaluations in terms of their work, and thus tend to construe a stressful situation as an opportunity rather than a threat. They have positive expectations about future events, are emboldened in their ability to handle objective and affective challenges (Peterson, 2000) and attribute career success to personal ability and effort, without personalising reasons for career failures or missteps (Brockner & Chen, 1996). Their proactive perspectives and behaviours also tend to be stress abating (McKee-Ryan & Kinicki, 2002). Therefore, we expect resilient individuals to view career change as a challenge and as an opportunity to learn, and to persist in the pursuit of desired outcomes and goals (Carver & Scheier, 1994, Chen & Lim, 2012). As resilient individuals are optimistic, proactive, open to new experience, and see challenges as opportunities to learn, our first hypothesis is that:

Hypothesis 1: Resilience will contribute positively to an individual’s adaptive coping represented by job-search assertiveness.

Given that resilient individuals have positive expectations about future events and show high positivity emotionality, our second hypothesis is that:

Hypothesis 2: The resilient factors, personal competence and acceptance of self and life will be positively associated with general well-being and assertive job seeking.

General Well-Being. Research attention on the negative aspects of unemployment is understandable given the discouragement and rejection that is often faced by people seeking reemployment (Fleig-Palmer, Luthans, & Mandernach, 2009). McKee-Ryan et al.'s (2005) meta-analytic study of psychological and physical well-being during unemployment showed that more negative than positive variables had been studied, as they relate to well-being. The present study adds to the growing body of research examining the positive variables associated with unemployment and well-being (e.g. Kanfer et al., 2001) and draws on two types of well-being research which provide a comprehensive understanding of well-being, the hedonistic (subjective) and the eudaimonic (more broadly applicable to life context and personal relations). The *hedonistic* viewpoint focuses on subjective well-being, which Diener, Suh, Lucas and Smith (1999) defined as a broad construct, encompassing four specific and distinct components including: (a) pleasant affect or positive well-being, (b) unpleasant affect or psychological distress, (c) life satisfaction, and (d) domain or situation satisfaction. The *eudaimonic* viewpoint focuses on psychological well-being, which is defined more broadly in terms of the fully functioning person and has been operationalized as a set of six dimensions, namely self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth (Ryff & Singer, 2008). We have included indices of both types of well-being as they both represent the different aspects of an individual's response to job loss. In the present study, we have also included indices of physical well-being, as unemployment has been shown to have a negative impact on individuals' physical well-being (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005).

As outlined earlier, research conducted at both aggregate and individual levels suggests that while unemployment, on average, has a negative impact on individuals' psychological and physical well-being (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005), there is also substantial variance among the unemployed in the degree to which they respond negatively to job loss (Galatzer-Levy, Bonanno & Mancini, 2010; Gowan, Riordan, & Gatewood, 1999; Leana and Feldman, 1994). We hope to enrich the design of outplacement interventions through a clearer understanding of the role of psychological and physical well-being on an individual's job-search behaviour in an outplacement context. In a major Australian study, the 1993 National Survey of Mental Health and Well-being, 22% of unemployed people reported depressive symptoms compared to 5% in the general population (Andrews, Hall, Teesson & Henderson, 1999). However, Moorhouse and Caltabiano (2007) found that unemployed Australians with resilient qualities reported less depression even though they had been job-searching for up to two years. This may be due to the characteristics of contingency (i.e. the expectation that an outcome is causally dependent on the person's behaviour) and personal competency (i.e. the belief that there is sufficient skill to utilise the expected contingency) which Creed et al. (2011) found were important correlates of well-being in unemployed Australians. These are significant findings given that unemployment duration plays a significant role in how people cope with job loss (Latack, Kinicki, & Prussia, 2005). According to Wanberg et al. (2005), emotional stability is integral to individuals who persist in their search to secure new employment. To extend this research, we wish to explore how individuals who are assertive and persistent in their job-search draw upon and amplify their positive well-being. General self-efficacy, as a prospective and operative construct, explicitly refers to personal agency or the belief that one's actions are responsible for successful outcomes. Hackett and Lent (1992) have demonstrated that general self-efficacy, that is, optimistic self-beliefs about coping with a variety of difficult demands,

is predictive of career related positive choices and performance. Wanberg et al. (2005) reported that general self-efficacy is related to average levels of job-search intensity over time. We included general self-efficacy, arguably a component of resilience, in this study to determine whether job-search assertiveness was related more strongly to personal agency or to other features of resilience.

Social Support. Other positive and possibly protective factors of a person's life situation are social support and social interaction. These contribute to psychological and physical well-being in two different ways (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). First, being rooted in a social-network helps people feel good about themselves and their lives, and increases the likelihood that they maintain a positive outlook during unemployment (Liem, 1992; Liem & Liem, 1979). Social support can assist individuals in regaining employment by providing a network of professional contacts (DeFrank & Ivancevich, 1986). Vinokur and Caplan (1987) found that highly specific forms of social support, affirming support for engaging in specific behaviours and the instrumentality of the job seeking effort, are important in influencing job-seeking behaviour. Second, social resources help to buffer stress and its negative impact on physical health (Eliason & Storrie, 2009; McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). They also found that being the recipient of care and concern (global social support) played an important role in mitigating the depressing emotional effects of unsuccessful job-search, particularly for job seekers with strong motivation to become reemployed.

The social support literature, including Pinquart and Sorensen's (2000) meta-analytic review of 286 studies of correlates of subjective well-being show that quality, rather than the quantity of social support relationships is reliably associated with subjective well-being (Antonucci, 1990). For example, Murrell, Norris, and Chipley (1992) found that 'anticipated functional support', the perception of the adequacy of available support, is more strongly related to positive affect than sheer numbers of

contacts, suggesting that people's appraisal of social support might be more important than the actual interpersonal contacts (Sarason, Sarason, Shearin & Pierce, 1987). On the basis of this research, we included a measure that includes both quality and quantity of social support, that may interact with resilience and general self-efficacy, and that may be positively associated with assertive job-search behaviours. We expect that resilience will exert an independent influence on assertive job-search behaviour. However, general self-efficacy and the quality of social support will also be associated with assertive job seeking. Thus, our third and fourth hypotheses are:

Hypothesis 3: Resilience will have a positive effect on assertive job-seeking independent of social support and general self-efficacy. A question arising in this context is whether resilience has a direct effect on assertive job-hunting or whether it affects assertive job-hunting via general well-being.

Hypothesis 4: Resilience will be positively associated with other protective factors, namely, social support and general self-efficacy.

Job-Search Behaviours

Job-search is a critical part of the reemployment process because it determines the choices that one has in accepting a job (Saks & Ashforth, 2002). Job-search intensity (Blau, 1993) or general effort has been linked to various job-search outcomes including the speed and probability of (re)employment (Saks & Ashforth, 1999; Wanberg et al., 2000). In a meta-analytic study of job-search behaviours and employment outcomes, Kanfer and her colleagues found that job-search effort and intensity were associated with employment success. Specifically, they found that career planning, setting career goals and formulating strategies for realising those goals influences job-search effectiveness (Kanfer et al., 2001).

Although researchers have studied the type and frequency of job-search behaviours and employment outcomes in a variety of contexts, little research to date has

expressly focused on the quality and level of job seekers' job-search skills (Fleig-Palmer et al., 2009). Indeed, Vuori and Vesalainen (1999) found that participation in guidance courses which enhance job-seeking activity by focusing on job-seekers' skills, job-search process and labour market knowledge, predicted re-employment. For the purpose of the present study, we assume that participants possess a high level of job-search skill, given that they have each been provided with customised individual outplacement programs of a minimum of two months duration. The programs include a variety of resources and services such as job-search coaching, career assessments, networking lists, resume-writing workshops, interview training and self-marketing training (Westaby, 2004).

One of the specific job-seeking behaviours associated with reemployment success is assertive job-seeking (Schmidt, Amel, & Ryan, 1993). Scott (1979) describes assertiveness as an individual's ability to identify rights and choices in a variety of situations, and to act on these insights while respecting the rights and choices of others. Assertive job seekers engage in specific behaviours (resume preparation, researching labour market information and job vacancies etc.) which, particularly in the current tight labour market, confer them an advantage over their passive counterparts. According to research, such assertive applicant behaviours have been shown to be favoured by employers (Cianni-Surridge & Horan, 1983). Moorhouse and Caltabiano (2007) found that unemployed individuals who possessed more resilient qualities were more likely to be assertive in their job-search independent of time spent job-searching. The present study extends this research to a less studied group of relatively high socioeconomic individuals in an outplacement context. We posit that positive coping outcomes, as demonstrated by positive well-being and assertive job-search behaviours, are the result of resilient qualities that moderate the adverse effects of job loss.

In summary, the hypotheses tested in this study are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Resilience will contribute positively to an individual's adaptive coping represented by job-search assertiveness.

Hypothesis 2: The resilient factors, personal competence and acceptance of self and life will have a positive association with general well-being and assertive job seeking.

Hypothesis 3: Resilience will have a positive effect on assertive job seeking independent of social support and general self-efficacy. A question arising in this context is whether resilience has a direct effect on assertive job hunting or whether it affects assertive job hunting via general well-being.

Hypothesis 4: Resilience will be positively associated with other protective factors, namely, social support and general self-efficacy.

Method

Participants and Procedure

The participants were recruited from a Sydney outplacement firm by email and from the researchers' networks. Surveys were sent to individuals who were recorded as being currently engaged in outplacement programs. The email informed them about the purpose of the study and what participation would entail. They were asked to complete and sign an online Information Letter and Consent Form which informed them that they could withdraw from the study at any time and that the information they provided would be anonymous.

A total of 177 individuals responded with 145 providing complete response set surveys (80 men, 59 women, 6 unknown). We were open to participants of any age (mean = 44.5 years ranging from 27 years to 65 years), nationality, education level (71% were tertiary qualified, 19% had more than 12 years education) or gender (58% were male, 42% were female). Most participants were either managers (56%) or professionals

(31%). Seventy-two percent of participants were married. Almost half the participants (46%) had no dependants. The majority of participants (64%) felt that their financial situation was either 'not at all' or only 'somewhat difficult' while 24 (17%) found it either 'hard', 'very' or 'extremely hard'. Sixty-one percent of participants rated work as either 'very' or 'extremely' important to them. For these participants, months spent job-searching ranged from less than 1 month (18%), 1 to 2 months (30%), 3 to 6 months (28%) and more than 6 months (24%); and the period of unemployment ranged from less than 1 month (23%), less than 2 months (22%), less than 6 months (25%), and for more than 6 months (31%).

Measures

Socio-demographic measures. Demographic questions included age, gender, years of education, marital and occupational status, living with someone or not, country of birth and whether and/or what previous major life challenges had been experienced.

Control variables.

Perceived financial difficulty. Perceived financial difficulty was assessed by a 5-point scale (*1 = not at all difficult; 5 = extremely difficult*) with the item: 'How difficult is it for you to live on your total present household income?' Participants were also asked how many dependents they were supporting.

Duration of unemployment. Participants were asked when they had found out their job had been made redundant, how long they had been unemployed, and how long they had been actively engaged in outplacement. As coping with job loss is influenced by length of unemployment, we wanted to evaluate whether having a break before starting their job-search and outplacement program and having prior notice of their retrenchment had an impact on job-search assertiveness.

The Brief Measure of Social Support. (SSQ, Sarason, Sarason, Sheerin & Pierce, 1987). A Brief Measure of Social Support is an abbreviated six-item version of the 27-item Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ). Each question requires a two-part answer: respondents are asked to list the people on whom they can rely and turn to in specified sets of circumstances (number), and to rate how satisfied they are with the available support (satisfaction). The scale includes questions such as: ‘Who accepts you totally, including your best and worst points?’ Mean satisfaction (SSQS) and number scores (SSQN) were calculated from the six items on each scale (*1 = very dissatisfied* to *6 = very satisfied*). A standardised variable (ZSSQN) was computed because some of the number scores were quite variable. However, a check showed that the results were very similar to those of the original scale. In the present study, the Cronbach’s alpha for SSQN was .85 and for SSQS was .89.

The General Self-Efficacy Scale. (GES; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1993). The General Self-Efficacy Scale is a 10-item scale that is designed to assess optimistic self-beliefs to cope with a variety of difficult demands in life and was included as a control measure. Participants are asked to rate their beliefs about the goals they set for themselves on a 1 – 4 scale of *1 = not at all true*, *2 = hardly true*, *3 = moderately true* and *4 = exactly true*. Questions were positively worded and include, ‘I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough’ or ‘I am confident that I could deal effectively with unexpected events’. In the present study the Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .86.

Job-search Intensity Scale. (Caplan, Vinokur, Price, & van Ryn, 1989; Vinokur & Caplan, 1987). The Job-Search Intensity Scale is a six-item measure that asked participants to indicate the extent to which they had engaged in six different job-search behaviours since their retrenchment such as, ‘How many times have you sent out a

resume or completed a job application since stopping work? (from 1 = *never* [0 times] to 5 = *very often* [at least 10 times]). The Cronbach's alpha in the present study was .89.

Work Role Centrality. (WRC; McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). Work Role Centrality indicates the general importance of work role to an individual's sense of self and was measured with the Job Valence Scale (Vinokur & Caplan, 1987) which consists of three items concerning the extent to which work is viewed as: (a) an important part of one's daily life, (b) a source of satisfaction in one's life, and (c) the extent to which it means more than just money. A 3-item index was constructed by averaging the answers that were indicated on 5-point response scales. This scale had a Cronbach's alpha of .78.

Independent variable.

Resilience Scale (15). Niall and Dias (2001) devised a shorter version of Wagnild and Young's (1993) original standardised Resilience Scale using a factor analysis. All items are positively worded and scored on a 5-point scale, 1 = *disagree* and 5 = *agree*. For example: 'My belief in myself is what gets me through hard times', 'My life has meaning'. Possible scores range from 15 to 75, with higher scores indicating higher levels of resilience. Niall & Dias (2001) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .91. In the present study the Cronbach's alpha was .88.

Dependent variables.

General Well-Being Schedule. (GWB; Dupuy, 1978; Taylor et al., 2003). The General Well-Being Schedule consists of 18 items indicating subjective feelings of general psychological and physical well-being. It includes items which ask about how happy, satisfied, hopeless, energetic, worried and healthy respondents have been. All items utilise the past month as the time frame of interest. The first 14 questions use a six-point rating scale that represents either intensity or frequency. The remaining four items use a 1-10 rating scale that is anchored by adjectives. Some items are reverse-

scored. High scores represent greater well-being. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale in the present study was .89.

Assertive Job-Hunting Survey. (AJHS; Becker, 1980). The Assertive Job-Hunting Survey is a 25-item scale that was designed to measure self-reported job-search assertiveness. The measure consists of 25 statements regarding specific job-hunting behaviours such as "I am reluctant to contact an organisation about employment unless I know there is a job opening". Responses are scored using a six-point scale from 1 (*very unlikely*) to 6 (*very likely*). There are both positively and negatively worded items, which are reverse scored to obtain scale scores ranging from 25 to 146. High scores indicate a more assertive job-search approach. The Cronbach's alpha was .84 in the present study.

Results

Preliminary analyses using PAWS 18 were conducted to associate demographic variables (sex, age, marital status, living with someone, income, years of education, occupation, country of origin) with the main variables of interest in this study (Resilience, Assertive Job-Searching, General Well-Being Scale, Social Support, General Self-Efficacy, Financial Hardship, Search Time, Work Role Centrality and Job-search Intensity). The results showed a significant negative Pearson's correlation between occupational category and assertive job hunting ($r = -.25, p < 0.01$) indicating that higher occupational status was associated with perceptions of less assertive job hunting. Education level was significantly associated with general well-being ($r = .30, p < 0.01$) suggesting that participants with higher education levels experienced less psychological and physical distress while in outplacement. There was a significant association between gender and satisfaction with social support ($X^2 = .71, p < 0.05$) with women indicating greater satisfaction with the quality of their social support.

As indicated in Table 1, the preliminary results showed that, as predicted, individuals with more resilient qualities reported significantly greater job-search assertiveness. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported. As predicted, Hypothesis 2 was also confirmed, that is, the resilience factors, personal competence and acceptance of self and life, were found to have a positive association with general well-being and assertive job seeking. In fact, personal competence and acceptance of self and life were significantly correlated with assertive job seeking and were highly correlated with general well-being. As predicted, resilience was highly correlated with general self-efficacy and also moderately, but significantly, associated with the perceived quality of social support. Thus, Hypothesis 4 was also supported. This answers our question about the role of personal agency in resilience as half of the resilient qualities measured in this study relate to personal agency. Satisfaction with quality of social support was moderately associated with general self-efficacy. Financial hardship was negatively associated with resilience and well-being, and to a lesser extent with general self-efficacy and quality of social support. Work role centrality was moderately but significantly associated with job-search intensity and the two factors of resilience, personal competence and acceptance of self and life were strongly associated with assertive job seeking, general well-being, general self-efficacy and quality of social support.

Table 1

Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations of the variables included in the study.

		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Assertive Job-Searching	3.88	0.68	1									
2	General Well-Being	4.78	0.96	.419**	1								
3	General Self-Efficacy	3.39	0.35	.290**	.383**	1							
4	Social Support Number	8.49	20.33	.254**	.160	.101	1						
5	Social Support Quality	4.98	0.86	.146	.261**	.149	.374**	1					
6	Job-search Intensity	3.22	1.10	.107	.216**	.127	.025	-.057	1				
7	Work Role Centrality	3.80	0.68	.088	-.099	.143	-.109	-.066	.192*	1			
8	Resilience ⁽¹⁾	4.34	0.48	.273**	.459**	.560**	.085	.275**	.004	.089	1		
9	<i>Personal Competence</i>	4.35	0.47	.272**	.408**	.577**	.008	.204*	.043	.148	.967**	1	
10	<i>Acceptance Self & Life</i>	4.34	0.62	.214	.466**	.402*	.225**	.361*	-.080	-.053	.848**	.686**	1

⁽¹⁾. Resilience is the total scale, of which 9 and 10 are the subscales.

*. $p < .05$; **. $p < .05$; $n = 145$

The third hypothesis, that resilience would have a positive effect on assertive job seeking independent of social support and general self-efficacy, was examined by carrying out a path analysis using AMOS 16 (Arbuckle, 2005) of the proposed model. Model fits were assessed using the χ^2 tests, root means square error of approximation (RMSEA), the comparative fit index (CFI) and the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI). Good model fit is evidenced by a non-significant chi-square, a RMSEA of .05 or less, a CFI of at least .95, and a TLI of at least .95 (Kline, 1998). The final model with standardised path coefficients is shown in Figure 1. This reduced model contains only observed variables and retains only the significant paths and covariances from the full model. The goodness of fit statistics indicated that this model fits the data very well ($\chi^2 = 6.68$ (df 8), $p = .57$) and assumes that quality of social support, general self-efficacy and resilience have a direct influence on general well-being and an indirect influence on assertive job seeking.

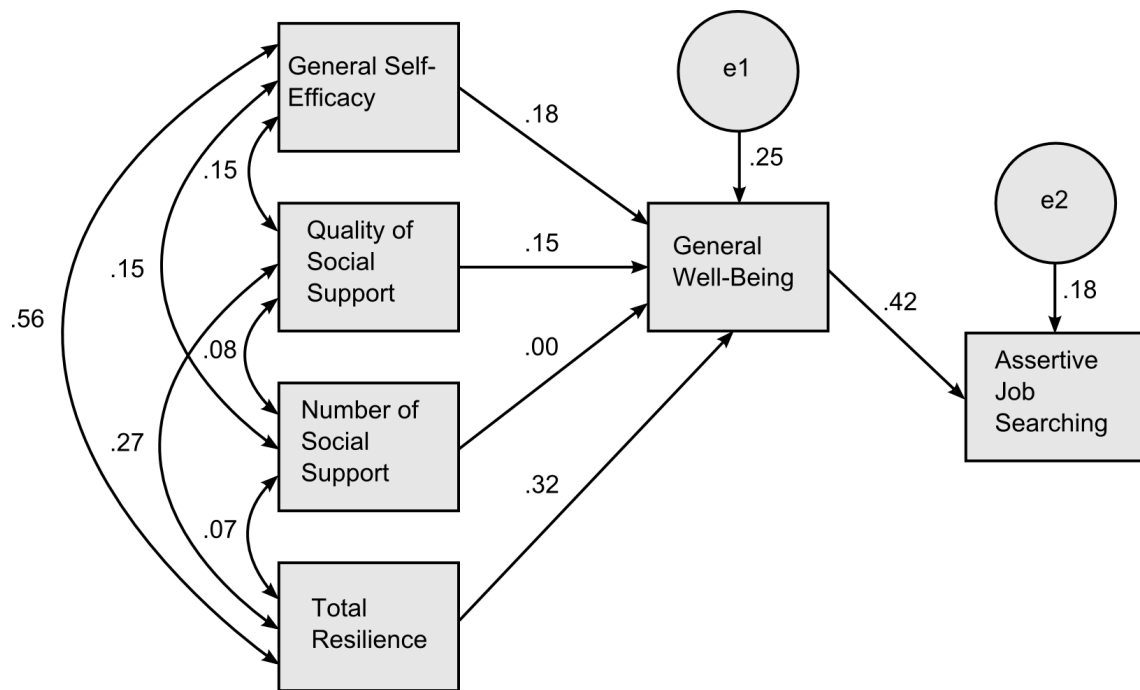


Figure 1. Final Model including direct paths from Social Support and General Self-Efficacy to Assertive Job-Hunting and via General Well-Being

In this model, the direct path between general well-being (GWB) and assertive job-hunting (AJH) was significant ($\beta = .42, p < .001$) as was the direct path from resilience to GWB ($\beta = .32, p < .001$). Self-efficacy was highly correlated with resilience ($r = .56, p = .01$). There was a significant but small association between quality of social support and general well-being ($r = .15, p < .05$) and a small covariance between quality of social support and resilience ($r = .27, p = .001$). The Sobel Test (1982) was used to determine whether the indirect effect of resilience on assertive job-hunting via general well-being was significantly different to zero. Results indicated that there was a significant indirect effect, $z' = 1.73, p = .05$ providing support for Hypothesis 3 and an answer to the question of whether resilience has a direct or indirect effect on self-reported assertive job-hunting.

To confirm this result, two alternate models were tested: the first replaced General Well-Being with Assertive Job-Hunting to determine whether the direction of these paths could be exchanged; the second was a non-recursive model allowing

causation to go between General Well-Being and Assertive Job Hunting. Neither of these models produced significant path coefficients or provided a better fit for the data suggesting that resilience has its effect on assertive job hunting via general well-being and not the other way round. The variance explained in assertive job-searching by this model was 18%, indicating that a limited number of resources and activities assessed during outplacement contributed to the prediction of self-reported job-search assertiveness.

Discussion

The present study identified the positive variables that influence and predict job-search behaviours and potential re-employment outcomes, clarifying the role of resilience in job-search for individuals engaged in outplacement. As predicted, resilience was positively associated with adaptive coping, represented by job-search assertiveness (Hypothesis 1). Resilience was also shown to be associated with assertive job seeking indirectly via general well-being, independent of social support and general self-efficacy (Hypothesis 3). That is, outplacement recipients with more resilient qualities (self-reliance, independence, determination, mastery, resourcefulness, perseverance) and a positive general perspective on themselves and life show more assertive job seeking and report greater physical and emotional well-being (Hypothesis 2). These results are significant as they not only replicate Moorhouse and Caltabiano's (2007) finding that resilient qualities help individuals cope with the adversity of retrenchment, but they also show that this occurs through their influence on general well-being. This is an important finding for outplacement consultants as it highlights the need for them to focus their support as much on individuals' general well-being as on their job-search skills and market knowledge.

We also found that the two resilience factors (*personal competence* and *acceptance of self and life*) proposed by Wagnild and Young (1993) differentially influenced general well-being and assertive job-search. Possessing a balanced, flexible and adaptable perspective on life was associated more highly with general well-being than was reported personal competence. This finding supports Wagnild and Young's (1993) suggestion that resilient individuals modulate maladaptive responses to adversity by cultivating a sense of peace and self-acceptance. We also found that assertive job seeking was more highly associated with the personal competence factor of resilience which supports earlier research showing that these personal dimensions are significantly related to job-search behaviour (e.g. Kanfer et al., 2001).

The results of the present study support the protective factor model of resilience (O'Leary, 1998) confirming that resilience (protective factor) can protect the retrenched from the adverse effects of job loss (risk factor) by increasing job assertiveness (adaptive outcome) via increased well-being. In addition, the finding that resilience exerts its effect on job-search assertiveness via general well-being lends support to Lazarus and Folkman's theory of coping (1984) which posits that appraisal of an event as taxing or exceeding available coping resources and well-being creates stress. As suggested, we found that individuals' appraisal of their job loss was linked with appraisal of their current employability. Perhaps not surprisingly, a sense of employability was quite high in this well-educated, financially comfortable sample of professionals. We found that the attitudes measured by the acceptance of self and life factor, which included "I am friends with myself", "My life has meaning", "I usually take things in my stride", "I can usually find something to laugh about" improved participants physical and psychological well-being in response to their retrenchment. Therefore, the capacity to construe their job loss within a meaningful and balanced life context helped these retrenches restore their physical and psychological well-being

which in turn promoted assertive job seeking. Indeed, the items from the resilience scale that most strongly and equally related to general well-being were “My life has meaning” and “I have enough energy to do what I have to do.”

General self-efficacy was highly correlated with resilience (Hypothesis 4). This finding is not surprising, given the fact that both measures tap into personal agency, that is, the belief that one's actions are responsible for successful outcomes. We found that while both personal competence and acceptance of self and life were strongly associated with general self-efficacy, *personal competence* was the more strongly associated. Somewhat surprising is the finding that, although resilience had a larger indirect effect on assertive job-searching than general self-efficacy, this effect was stronger for the personal competence measure of resilience. Interestingly, the two most strongly associated items from the resilience scale with assertive job seeking were “My life has meaning” and “When I am in a difficult situation, I can usually find my way out of it.” According to Wagnild and Young (1993), meaningfulness refers to the “realisation that life has a purpose and the valuation of one’s contributions” (p.168). The other item reflects ‘self-reliance’ or ‘the ability to depend on oneself and one’s capacities’. These findings support other research with similar concepts showing that the ability to cope more effectively with a variety of stressful events is associated with higher self-esteem and perceived control, higher levels of optimism and mental health (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005).

Financial hardship was significantly and negatively associated with assertive job-searching, that is, those with less financial concern were less assertive in job seeking. Those participants with less financial concern also reported higher levels of general well-being, general self-efficacy and quality of social support. This is consistent with other research showing that higher levels of financial security are related to lower levels of job-search intensity and higher levels of well-being (Wanberg et al., 2001). In

addition, Jones (1992) for instance, has argued that the most important determinant of the expression of health symptoms following job loss is availability of income. McKee-Ryan et al., (2005) suggest that this might be the case because “possessing financial resources improves access to other important resources, such as social and leisure activities, food, housing, and general physical security” (p.57).

That job-search intensity was not associated with assertive job-searching and negatively associated with general well-being was surprising given that intuitively, one would expect that greater involvement in job-search activities would improve well-being, because these activities are directed towards securing a new role. Given that almost half of the current participants had only been looking for work for 1 to 2 months and 44% had been unemployed for less than two months, these findings may reflect that these individuals need to address the negative emotions associated with their retrenchment before engaging in their job-search (Leana & Feldman, 1994). Leana and Feldman (1992) also argue that job-search activities may decrease well-being due to the inevitable rejection that usually accompanies any job-search.

Gowan et al., (1999) argue that higher educational status should be associated both with greater job-search activities and individual confidence. Typically, education is viewed as an asset in job placement and should increase an individual’s confidence in his or her ability to successfully compete for jobs. In the present study, more years of education was not associated with assertive job seeking but was positively associated with general well-being. The fact that most participants were highly educated, financially comfortable and receiving outplacement support might explain why their job-search intensity was not as high as expected. In addition, as indicated by Jones (1992), we found that quality of social support was moderately associated with financial well-being. As predicted, satisfaction with social support was more strongly associated with assertive job seeking and general well-being than quantity of social contacts

(Hypothesis 4). McKee-Ryan et al. (2005) suggested that the relationships between quality of social support, financial hardship and general well-being may reflect varying degrees of financial obligations or individuals' appraisal of the situation.

Directions for future research

As with much of the research in this area, this study examined individual differences in experiences of job loss using self-reported data which is susceptible to social desirability bias. To counter concerns about bias, future research in this area needs to employ mixed methods using behavioural indicators, and observer-reports, as well as more in-depth interview data to gain insight from retrenched individuals as to what fosters resilience, what constitutes adversity and what helps them to retain their sense of well-being. The sample was mostly high status professionals who were well educated, financially secure and with positive general well-being which precludes drawing firm conclusions or generalising the results in ways that will now be discussed. For instance, this sample may not generalise to the many retrenched individuals who do not enjoy any outplacement provision. While the homogeneity of the present sample might be considered a limitation, high status professionals experience repeated career transition cycles and career transition in this group is understudied and not well understood (Zikic & Klehe, 2006). Consequently, this research offers fresh insights into what improves well-being and job-search effectiveness in this group.

A further question of generalisability concerns the characteristics of those who returned the survey. As is true in most survey studies, we know very little about those who chose not to participate. Wanberg et al. (2005) recommend that the measure of job-search intensity should be dynamic as it probably changes over the course of career transition. We may also have found a stronger impact of general self-efficacy on assertive job seeking if we had used the more specific job-search self-efficacy measure

which has been shown to influence job-search behaviours (Wanberg et al., 2001). Finally, the conclusions of this study would have been strengthened if, in addition to self-reported assertive job-searching, it had included follow-up data about individual's reemployment status and the quality of their reemployment. A useful follow-up study would involve contacting the study participants to determine if they had found new jobs and if they were happy with them.

Conclusion

Adversity can bring about benefits, that is, the experience of adversity promotes the emergence of a quality that makes the person better off afterward than beforehand (Carver, 1998). In other words, people follow different individual paths in the way they experience adversity. While some individuals experience unemployment as a negative life event, they also appreciate it as an opportunity to change their direction in life and to improve their career prospects (Zikic & Klehe, 2006). This paper supports the suggestion by Rickwood et al., (2004) that outplacement providers need to address issues of participants' self-understanding by including a career resiliency framework as part of their program offering. This would bolster intrinsic motivation, cultivate a sense of well-being, and encourage self-belief in the face of adversity; as a result of generating these positive psychological attitudes, employment uncertainty would be mitigated (Fleig-Palmer et al., 2009). If resilience can be trained, the training of resilience in retrenched employees will, as the present study has comprehensively outlined, empower job seekers to overcome obstacles in their assertive pursuit of reemployment, and, if our findings are accurate, it will do so largely through enhancing their well-being.

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Study 2: Changing jobs – changing self?

Introduction

The current economic environment, characterised by rapid changes, increasing market pressures and leaner organisations, has implications for the unemployed seeking to re-enter the workforce. Factors such as technological innovation, the emergence of the knowledge economy, globalisation and increased global mobility, an ageing workforce and population, and ongoing economic restructuring add to the growing concern that workers feel about their future when facing retrenchment and unemployment (Willis & Anderson, 2006). The impact of these changes may only be starting to influence how businesses are restructured to remain competitive in the future, which raises concerns about how these changes might exacerbate the well-known damaging effects of unemployment on individuals and their families (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, Murphy & Athanasou, 1999; 2005; Paul & Moser, 2009).

Patton and McMahon (2006) highlight the impact of these changes on career theory and practice and note that broader definitions of career have emerged that take into account lifelong processes, choices, and an array of individual and external factors. The very definitions of terms like 'work', 'job' and 'career' are undergoing radical change (Bridges, 1994), a change that Doyle (2000) describes as: "...a significant shift away from a psychological contract which traditionally embodied the values of mutuality and reciprocity, towards one that represents a more calculative and instrumental relationship between employees and their work organisations. Organisations now expect their employees to actively create and manage a form of personalised 'employability' in what is becoming a jobs-for-now structure and culture (p.233).

While the new generation of managers and executives were socialised into (and thus understand) the 'boundaryless' concept of careers, this is not so often the case for

people aged fifty years old and over where the normative assumption of stable employment and a continuing strong belief in singular employment and loyalty is often the norm (Miles, 2003). Many managers in traditional corporations have spent years tying identity and self-perception to their relationship with an organisation (Heckscher, 1995). When released into this new employment context by retrenchment, losing this organisational link can be especially crippling for them (Noer, 1993). Thus, the ostensibly similar experience of 'job loss' impacts people differently, with many going through an identity shift as well as coming to terms with a changed employment market.

Apart from financial distress (Doherty & Tyson, 1993), the differential impacts and significance of retrenchment are shaped by how central work is to an individual's life (Noer, 1993). The negative impacts of job-loss have been well-documented (McKee-Ryan et.al., 2005; Parker, Chmiel & Wall, 1997; Ryan & Macky, 1998; Shaw & Barrett-Power, 1997). For individuals who view retrenchment as a 'blessing in disguise' (Zikic & Klehe, 2006), while they view job loss as a negative life event, they also appreciate it as an opportunity to improve their career prospects and change their life's direction. These individuals are more likely to be those who receive significant redundancy payouts and are looking for a career change (Bennett, Martin, Bies, & Brockner, 1995). Outplacement is likely to be a useful support for such individuals as they navigate their career transition.

Outplacement

Outplacement is a significant organisational strategy for dealing with retrenchment or career transition support to help participants re-enter the workforce. The goal is to assist participants re-enter the workforce into jobs for which they are well suited. Typically, outplacement services are a package, funded by the retrenching organisation, offering participants resources and services such as job-search coaching, career assessments, networking lists, resume-writing workshops, interview training and

self-marketing training (Westaby, 2004). In response to employment trends, the outplacement industry has grown enormously in the last decades (Insala Report, 2009). Reporting on retrenchments in Australia Buchanan et al. (1992) noted that: “Even in periods of employment growth the flow of retrenchments is considerable. Thus, there is a need for a continuing focus on retrenchment assistance throughout the business cycle, even though the type of assistance required may vary” (p.2).

Willis and Anderson (2006) suggest that, while outplacement programs fulfil an important function, most focus on getting the retrenched person a new job and are not always sufficient to deal with the complex human consequences of organisational change. Gribble and Miller (2009) recommend a greater focus on the retrenched person's experience of the service, and his or her general well-being as she/he begins outplacement and later, a new role. Similarly, Martin and Lekan (2008) argue that outplacement professionals need to help retrenchees target strengths and weaknesses, overcome the trauma of career transition, and develop comprehensive support systems. Improving outplacement services is crucial for two reasons; firstly, large numbers of individuals use outplacement services, and secondly, these individuals are transitioning into a changed employment context characterised by increased job insecurity, precarious employment, and fragmented, discontinuous career trajectories (Doyle, 2000).

Despite its burgeoning role in organisational life, there is an absence of academic research in this field. Owens (2008) notes that much of the published information surrounding outplacement is reported in outlets such as professional magazines by human resource professionals, or the outplacement providers themselves. The present study extends two previous strands of research which examined individuals' coping strategies (Kinicki, Prussia & McKee-Ryan, 2000; McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg et al., 2005; Zikic & Klehe, 2006) and emotional experience (Bridges, 1991;

Fugate, Kinicki & Ashforth. 2004; Fugate & Kinicki, 2008) of involuntary career transition. Further, various models of successful adult transition have been used in a career context (Adams and Spencer, 1988; Bridges, 1991; Kanchier & Unruh, 1988; Schlossberg, 2007). We draw upon this research to fill the gap in existing knowledge. Using a Grounded Theory approach and semi-structured interviews, we explore individual differences in definition and negotiation of successful career transition. We ask: what factors contribute to optimal transitions through, and adaptation following the retrenchment process and what should outplacement provide to optimise participants' experience of career transition?

Method

Initially, from a list of over 100 participants currently engaged in programs from an outplacement company based in Sydney, six volunteers were selected on the basis of their availability to meet with the researcher at mutually convenient times. An email informed them of the nature of the study and their participation, that they could withdraw at any time and that their anonymity was assured. As the researcher had observed that partners can play a significant role in their spouse's career transition, a couple was added to the sample. Peer feedback arising from a conference presentation of preliminary results, resulted in the inclusion of two lower income women who only received standard public job placement support. This enabled us to consider the experience of those who did not receive generous outplacement packages. There were two single participants who lived alone, a single mother with children, two participants living with partners only, and five married participants living with their spouses and children. The ages of participants ranged from 32 years to 59 years old with the median age, 47 years old. Their incomes ranged from AUD 45K to AUD 400K; median salary was AUD 120K. Each of the participants was in a different place with respect to when

they commenced their outplacement program. Of the seven who were offered outplacement programs, two were still working, two had taken significant breaks before commencing their programs and the remaining three engaged with their programs within two weeks of finishing their last role.

Data Analysis

To better understand the psychological and behavioural processes underpinning career transition, interviews were transcribed and thematically coded using procedures from Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), including open coding, axial coding, coding for process, and selective coding. Through open coding, concepts were arranged into categories using line-by-line analysis, where data were examined phrase-by-phrase and sometimes word-by-word to generate initial categories and determine their properties and dimensions. Axial coding is defined as “the process of relating categories to their subcategories, termed 'axial' because coding occurs around the axis of a category, linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.123). The researcher coded for process by creating a 'transcript file' – a document divided into three columns: the middle column for verbatim transcripts of interviews, the right for codes, and the left column for notes about interview process, interaction details, and a critique of the researcher's questioning techniques. The final phase of data analysis involved what Strauss and Corbin (1998) term selective coding, “the process of integrating and refining the theory,” where “the major categories are finally integrated to form a larger theoretical scheme” (p.145). Since the primary author works in an outplacement agency, to counter her possible subjective biases, the co-researcher independently coded the data. We elucidated relationships between categories, and made relational statements or provisional hypotheses about the process of participants' coping with change.

Prior to the first interview, we collaboratively developed a series of questions designed to capture individuals' experience of career transition. The questions were intentionally broad, for example: "Can you describe your thoughts about your retrenchment? What has been the most helpful aspect of this transition for you? What have you learned from this experience? How has this experience shaped the way you view your job/career moving forward?" In this way, we gathered rich and varied information that allowed us to explore the commonalities and differences in individuals' experiences of career transition. We continued to sample and theorise until we reached 'theoretical saturation': the point at which no new codes were arising, where new interview data did not require us to extend our theoretical framework or the model of career transition that had emerged.

Results

Given the multiplicity of personal, organisational and societal factors associated with career transitions, defining successful transition is not easy. We found Van Genep's (1908) theory of transition to be a useful meta-structure to function as the nucleus of our model. Some of our themes required the amplification and extension of the model (see Figure 1). According to Van Genep (1908), 'Rites of Passage' describe the way that people move through life's stages in three distinct phases; *separation* – departure from identity-sustaining roles and responsibilities, *transition* - a liminal phase where one is not what one was nor yet what one will become; and *reincorporation* - the reintegration of the person into his/her new role in the community, with a new set of expectations and contingencies operative. We found that retrenchment sets in play a series of non-linear, interdependent rites of passage, which are more or less well-negotiated, depending on a number of influences discussed below. In the following

section, we detail our findings concerning the main phases of transition and other features of our model that impact on the nature and quality of the transition experience.

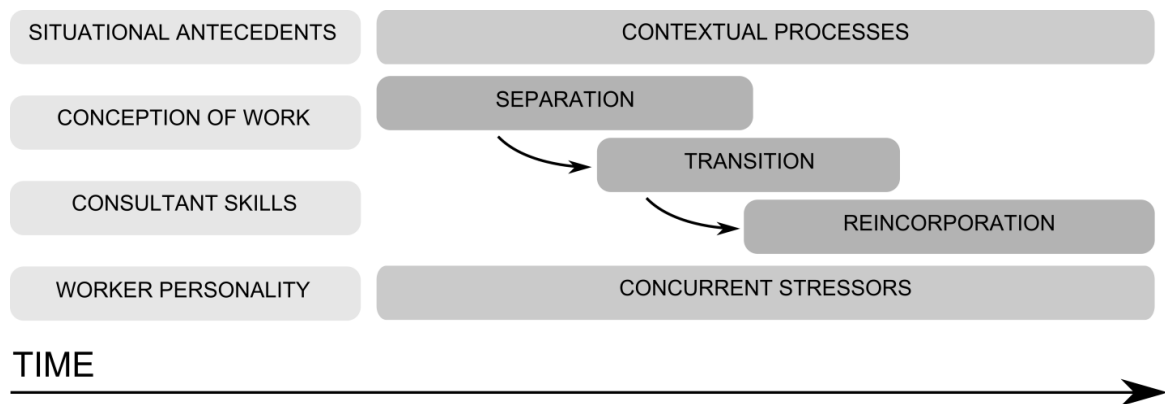


Figure 1. Career transition model: Rites of passage, precursors and contextual categories

Separation Rites

Separation Rites (pre-liminal) include the removal of the individual from his or her ‘normal’ social life. In a career transition context, separation occurs when individuals are notified of their job loss and exit the organisation. This was often described by participants as comparable to the beginning of a grief process including shock, confusion, scattered thoughts, cognitive loss of control, anger and for some, shame: as John stated, *“It was just this feeling of I suppose, not despair but despondency.”* Another described her initial response as ‘dual’ which reflects the reaction of many participants, *“one part of me was sad”*... [but at the same time] *“great as it provided the opportunity to have a break.”* For others, separation from their organisation was coupled with a feeling of having been 'shafted'. Harry was critical of how his exit had been managed: *“People were put into three groups...[as if] they were given cards....As people applied for an [internal] role, for the red card people it was thank you very much, out you go. ‘Orange’... you're going but we will see if we can do something. The green ones, you're safe.”* When participants felt their exits had been

handled respectfully, they were better able to accept job loss. This is consistent with findings that inefficient termination and notification processes often prolong employees' emotional suffering and inhibit moving forward (Brockner & Chen, 1996).

Not all participants passively submitted to the confusion and shock associated with their job loss. Some, instead, asserted a choice about how they reacted to the event. For example, one individual, whose retrenchment was sudden and unexpected, said that after he received assurance from his manager that he was not being 'pushed out' decided to "*look at the positives of it...the excitement of change.*" Participants like this evidenced an emotion-focused coping style based on accepting and managing their emotions. As Alice states, "*...You know what you've got to do and you've just got to be mindful of your emotions and not let them force your hand at incorrect decisions.*" Thus, while they may have taken the separation news personally, initially, those with self-reflective awareness were able to ascribe meaning and value to their emotions to help reframe their job loss. For example, Rick said, "*It's not a person, it's business... [and knowing that]... gives you an extra layer to realise what way things work.*" Individuals like this owned their emotional responses rather than rejecting or denying them, which improved their self-esteem and enabled them to engage with their career transition with greater autonomy. For example, these participants were able to voice the reality of what had transpired and state, "*I was dismissed*", "*I was retrenched.*"

The separation phase of transition permitted helpful new forms of engagement: getting to the gym, weight loss, reconnecting with friends and family and spending time in nature. One powerful, positive consequence of the separation mentioned by all participants was re-establishing a healthier, more balanced life. As this occurred, participants realised, in hindsight, that they had been experiencing burn-out prior to their job loss, but because they had been so busy, they were not paying attention to it. For example, Victor describes his recent realisation of the inner demands that work had

been making on him in terms of his bodily health: *“I knew that I was sometimes not very well and I was thinking... I’ve got the flu or something...through all this experience, I started to realise well I feel good. I don’t have headaches. I’m not stressed... I want to go to the gym to do sport and I feel like I want to meet people. When I was working at Company X, I was kind of – stressed and had headaches all the time..... So when I will go back to work I know that I will have some difficult periods etc. but I will know what it is whereas before I didn’t.”*

All of the participants noted 'loss of control' as one of the most challenging aspects of transition: they all expressed a need to ‘get back in the driver's seat of their life’. This observation is consistent with Latack, Kinicki and Prussia’s (1995) research on coping with job loss showing that: “High coping efficacy in the face of job loss translates into the perception that one has control” (p. 7). Schlossberg, Goodman, & Waters (1995) also found that 'who's in control' is a focal point for many people making significant transitions. We observed that individuals with high coping efficacy made sure that they left their organisation at a time that was mutually agreed upon and with a financial package that enabled them to take the time they desired to find a new role. For example, Terry, after skilfully engineering his redundancy says: “What it meant was that I left, which is what I wanted to do. I left on good terms with everyone and with money in the bank which I wouldn’t have done had I just been looking for a job elsewhere.”

We discovered an intriguing paradox. While maintaining a sense of control over their career transition allowed participants to engage in the process with increased autonomy and sense of agency, this did not include attributing job loss to personal factors. In fact, we observed that those who emphasised factors external to themselves in interpreting their job loss were those most able to fully engage in job-search activities. They attributed job loss to issues outside themselves and beyond their control, including,

that market factors made the retrenchment inevitable or that the employer had made a mistake.

Transition Rites

Transition Rites (liminal) occur where one is not what one was, nor yet what one will become – a vulnerable, troubled and doubting time for many, a state of ‘limbo’. In our study, all participants mentioned this phase of disconnection where they think through “Who am I?” and “What do I want to do?” and where, surprisingly to us, many began to welcome uncertainty. One participant describes this as: *“I realised I hit the brick wall but I had absolutely no idea what to do, where to go ... it’s still a work-in-progress because that conversation is still emerging really but the point is...it’s giving time to let that [conversation] emerge.”* Or as one participant says: *“I don’t have the answer, but at least I’ve got the question and I know there are a number of things to investigate.”* Both of these participants were able to accept the ‘shades of grey’ in their situation which is associated with high PM individuals (Fogel, 1995) and did not rely upon absolute all-or-none thinking. The point at which participants moved into this transition phase, was influenced by the stage they were at in their transition program and also by whether or not they had taken a break before commencing their program. Those who had taken a break appeared to be ready to ‘hit the ground running’ in terms of finding a new job. Those who had not taken time out required more time to reflect on what they wanted to do next. Not surprisingly, participants on shorter programs felt the need to move through the program more quickly.

Positive re-framing. In this transition phase, we observed many participants begin positively re-framing their retrenchment; re-evaluating the importance and role of work in their lives. This shift did not occur as a movement from one point to another but rather as ‘a transitional process of inner re-orientation’ (White, 1995). In other words, transition is not just another word for change, but expresses psychological processes

involved in adapting to disruption (Bridges, 1994). Participants described their transitions in terms of meta-competencies and insights that are pregnant with possibility. For example, *“Up to now I was thinking I need to find a job because I need money. Now I want a job because I also know that I'm going to enjoy it. ... I've learnt about a number of things like communication, the way to behave with others ...so that motivates me.”* Similarly, *“Looking back on it now, the retrenchment, I don't see it as a negative I see it completely as a positive opportunity that's been handed to me...because you learn more about yourself. You kind of have to look in deep ...”* In contrast, the ‘closed’ construction of a low psychologically minded participant’s transition was expressed in ways that seemed almost without hope for change and improvement, *“As time [between jobs] goes by you realise that compromise is probably going to have to be greater.”*

Reappraising Centrality of Work. In this phase, participants revised their conception of work, coming to see it more as an expression of 'who one is', rather than as an economic necessity. This led them to distinguish between a job and a career, as Terry said, *“I hadn't been tending to my career as I was having a job.”* In describing his transition, he was surprised that it entailed more than getting another job *“it's turned into so who are you again?... Let's get that sorted out and the job will follow.”* Participants who saw their retrenchment as an opportunity for self-development also described an increased sense of autonomy and agency; construing work as an expression of who they were without allowing it to ‘colonise’ their identity. Our research question became refined, addressing: why do some people experience career transition as an opportunity to change jobs, and also to change self?

Reincorporation Rites

Reincorporation Rites (post-liminal) occur when the individual takes up a new status (reincorporation). While reincorporation might include starting a new job, it also extends beyond an event. This phase of learning new ways of thinking and living is

well-captured by Harry, a very status-conscious and career-oriented individual, *“I’m saying pay is not the only thing...I’m learning to admire and enjoy the aspects of life which I neglected.”* In this phase, participants were energised, discovering that they could make choices about their future careers based on a renewed sense of self. For instance, Victor says, *“It helped me just to be more open about the environment and ...it opened my mind to the other parts of the world.”* This renewed confidence and openness about the future was not based on positive external circumstances, as not all participants were re-employed.

In the reincorporation phase, participants were required to accept, and embrace, the challenges associated with job loss. Finding a new job required them to pro-actively seek information and opportunities through networking (e.g. ex-colleagues, recruiters, human resources professionals, their family and friends) and attending interviews. No matter how individuals initially feel about cold calling, networking or interviews, securing a new job requires them to overcome their apprehension and engage in these activities. Our findings showed real change had occurred as Victor describes: *“I’ve changed my mind about the way I saw my job ... I will change the way I work, before it was all about me ... I will manage people in a different way.”* At earlier phases of career transition, most participants described networking as 'that dreadful word' [Jane], by the time they reached the reincorporation stage they had changed, and were now unafraid of risk, vulnerability, or leaving their 'comfort zone'. For example, Victor says: *“I was really not comfortable with other people...I was quite protected at X ... but with this process I now feel more comfortable with people and understand the importance of people.”* This is a considerable achievement given that, in addition to meeting the challenges of promoting *themselves*, many also needed to understand and adjust to an employment landscape that had changed since they had last looked for a job. From these

observations, we concluded that optimal post GFC career transition requires individuals to reconfigure their sense of self and work.

As Figure 2 shows, in addition to the core rites of passage, additional dimensions arose from the data that shaped how people negotiated the process and which promoted self-development during retrenchment. We observed that, at the point of separation, participants' reactions depended on four pre-existing factors or precursors that we identified as: Situational Antecedents, Conception of Work, Consultant Skills, and Worker Personality. These are discussed in turn below.

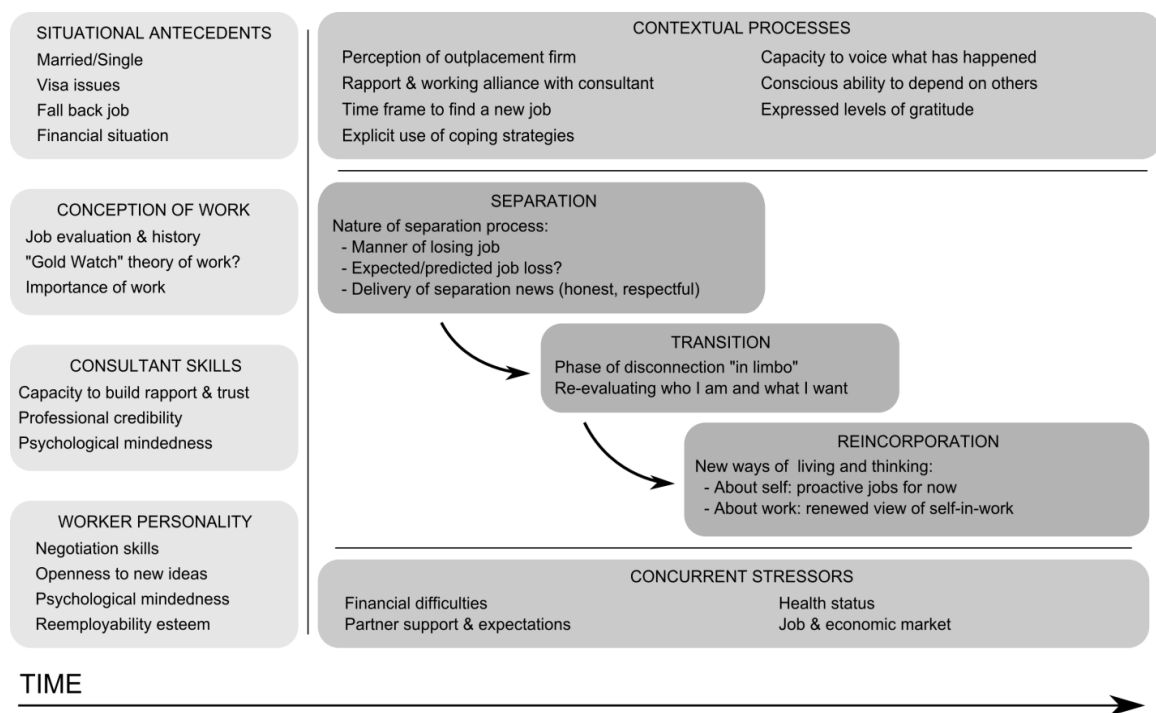


Figure 2: The Detailed Career Transition Model: Core Rites of Passage, Precursors, and Context detailing themes emerging from interviews

Situational Antecedents

Situational antecedents included factors such as: marital status, financial situation, residency status and existence of a fall-back job. Overall, individuals experienced their partners and/or friends as supportive but some also felt the burden of managing partner expectations. All mentioned feeling challenged when asked by family

or friends if they had found a job. This is consistent with research showing the importance of social support in coping with job loss (Latack, Kinicki & Prussia, 1995; Wanberg, Hough & Song, 2002). The emotional support of family and friends participants described, is especially important during stressful transitions (DeFrank & Ivancevich, 1986). It bolsters optimism during unemployment which enhances readiness to search for work options (Gowan, Riordan, & Gatewood, 1999). Seven of the ten participants mentioned their redundancy payouts to the interviewer highlighting that 'financial worries' was the antecedent of greatest concern. Anna, the youngest participant, who was quite differently placed in terms of her situation to the majority of older participants, says: *"I just think the company has made it so easy for me, especially in my position of having no debts, no family, nothing tying me down."* Clearly, without the burden of responsibility some of the adversity associated with the retrenchment situation is abated.

Conception of Work

People entered the retrenchment process with diverse views about the meaning and centrality of work to their lives. Conceptions of work varied from a traditional 'gold watch' conception where it is hard work and loyalty that are sought and rewarded, to a transactional 'jobs-for-now' view: a more contingently reviewed contract than lifetime loyalty where work entails actively creating and managing a personalised 'employability'. In this study, several of those with the 'gold watch' view described their retrenchment as unfair. Jane, for instance had been with her organisation for almost fifteen years, liked working there and had intended to stay there as long as possible. She was a loyal, hardworking employee and felt her job was 'safe'. She held a traditional conception of work where she believed her hard work and loyalty would be rewarded by tenure and promotion. She says: *"...[I] was disappointed and sad that I had been made redundant without having the opportunity to look for other positions within the*

organisation, because the timeframe was so short. It was a great organisation to work for, and I had fully anticipated that I would continue there. So to be informed that I was being made redundant was shocking. Well shocking is too strong a word; unexpected and disappointing.” Julie's description highlights how the circumstances of job loss can conflict sharply with a person's philosophy of work, shaping how they manage loss. Given the centrality of mutual loyalty and respect to her view of work, Julie felt ‘disappointed’ and ‘sad’ about the inevitability of the decision. This view was in the majority. In contrast, the two youngest workers viewed work as 'business' which contributed to how quickly they were able to accept the job loss. Although initially Rick said there was some shock, he eventually saw it as a “*positive opportunity*” to challenge the “*traditional values*” associated with the gold watch philosophy of work and “*to learn more about [him]self*” so that he could manage his personal employability and explore the “*different...[career] experiences out there.*” Other individuals who had begun their career transition with gold-watch conceptions of work were able to change to a more job-for-now conception.

Consultant Skills

Consultant skills are an important part of developing a working alliance with participants. The working alliance refers to features such as: personal abilities, negotiation of expectations, and openness to change that shaped and were shaped by the relationship process between individuals and their career consultant. All of the participants mentioned as a positive feature of transition, being able to discuss work and self-identity with a professional career consultant. This finding is consistent with Blustein's (1992) research showing that instrumental social support (constructive advice and resources) increases job-seekers' control and competence, particularly in career exploration tasks. Zikic and Klehe (2006) also found that the instrumental social support provided by outplacement consultants was positively related to both self and

environmental exploration and reemployment quality. Jane described her consultant conversations as providing: *“suggestions and advice to help me focus...what I need to do to make the transition back to work ... helping me realise that the skills that I have can be applied to a number of different positions... I guess the restrictions were in my own mind.”* Talking to, and receiving feedback from a trained career consultant during this stage gave participants the opportunity and emotional, physical and temporal space to reconfigure self and work. One participant described this as *'hitting the reset versus panic button'*. For him, panic gave way to clarity, and in turn, a state of calm and a personal openness to seeking challenges, allowing the seeds of re-invention to be sown. Rick: *“I could easily have gone straight back into a role, which I compare to being in a rut. It's like pressing the reset button and going into a bit of a clearer focus, rather than just going - I need a job.... I have these skills so I can wait till the right thing comes along. Then I can go for the challenges if I want and I'm not scared.”*

In contrast, the two interviewees who did not receive outplacement support both indicated that going through career transition without professional support was very difficult. One decided to pay for career coaching and the other attended the equivalent of Job Network job-search training, which included two sessions with an employment consultant. The latter indicated her satisfaction with support on a scale of 1-10: *“In terms of my job-search, I did what I had to do to obtain my unemployment benefits but I don't think I would have found anything if I had relied solely on them, so I would say 5/10 and that is being 'very nice'.”*

Worker Personality

The findings suggested several personality differences in response to retrenchment. For example, initially, not all participants were able to name the ‘job loss’. After having to re-apply for his role, Harry says *“I was basically told, you know you have been made – you know you were not successful in this role blah, blah...”* Victor,

on the other hand states, *"I've been dismissed."* Another difference was participants' conscious ability to depend on others for new input, revealed in the acknowledgement of the help received from the consultant and others within the outplacement agency. As one participant says, *"...to be able to come here and get reassurance from my consultant that there are places, things out there for me, for my experience and my intelligence, it's good to get that reassurance, because it gives you that belief to go and restart again."* Some participants demonstrated self-reflective distance, evidenced in the awareness that they came in to this process with one set of expectations, and ended up reconfiguring those, for example, some realised it was not just about finding a new job. Harry, for example says he learnt the importance of having a better work/life balance: *"Because when you're on a runaway train you take it for granted that you work 60 hours a week and that's coping, but the human aspect of it is much more..."* It appeared that many of these personality features could be described by the concept of psychological mindedness.

Psychological mindedness (PM) is a cognitively toned personality factor describing "a willingness to try to understand self and others, a belief in the benefits of discussing one's problems, openness to new ideas, and access to one's feelings" (Conte, Ratto, & Karasu, 1996). Further defined by Hall (1992), PM individuals are those who clearly display "both the interest in and ability for reflectivity" about internal psychological phenomena "across both intellectual and affective dimensions" (p.138). Most research on psychological mindedness has occurred in the clinical arena and has focused on assessing clients' suitability for psychodynamic therapy or the prediction of psychotherapy outcomes (Shill & Lumley, 2002) and findings suggest that it is positively correlated with treatment outcomes (Conte et al., 1996). Career transition in the context of an outplacement agency with an assigned personal consultant is not psychotherapy; however, there are some common features. For example, both involve a

relationship that enhances an understanding of self and others, a belief in the benefit of discussing one's problems, the willingness to examine one's frames of reference, and an openness to exploring new ideas and expressing feelings. It is perhaps not surprising that we found that those who were more psychologically-minded had better career transition outcomes.

In support of our findings, other research with non-clinical samples has shown that PM is positively associated with attributes likely to enhance or optimise the experience of transition such as: ambiguity tolerance (AT), and a subjective sense of well-being (Trudeau & Reich, 1995). It is negatively associated with external locus of control and magical thinking (Beitel, Ferrer, & Cecero, 2004). In their study of the relationship between PM and personality measures, Beitel and Cecero (2003) found that openness to experience was the best predictor of PM followed by extraversion and neuroticism. These features are likely to be relevant to, and to provide positive influence on, an individual's transition as they process their emotions in the separation phase, gain control of their key fears concerning employability and future career in the transition phase and focus on networking, interviewing and weighing up opportunities in the reincorporation phase. Overall, we observed that these individuals were both autonomous and receptive in the way that they engaged with their outplacement consultants and program and were better equipped to endure the inevitable uncertainty of the various phases of their career transition. As a consequence, they were not only able to effectively negotiate the phases of their transition but were also able to adaptively cope with the stressors involved.

Contextual Processes

A number of important contextual processes marked each participant's transition experience, including: individual perceptions of the outplacement company, the time frame to find a new job and their explicit awareness of coping processes. Personality

dimensions are both antecedents and part of the contextual processes of an individual's subjective experience of career transition as noted in our model.

Perception of the outplacement company. All of the participants evaluated the outplacement company positively, despite having experienced different lengths of program (from two months to six months). In addition to working with their consultant, they noted the following positive features: the selective use of program, resume-writing, people contact, space to formulate life questions, sense of being cared for by the outplacement company, continuity, structure and belonging. When asked how they felt that the outplacement support could be improved, the following features were mentioned: the matching of consultant with participant on a 'best-fit', rather than on a 'consultant availability' basis; feeling foreign in the 'corporate' feel of the outplacement company for those who had not come from a corporate environment. Tony requested the provision of a clearer roadmap as to what to expect of their outplacement program, saying *“as participants are sponsored through programs for a specified period of time by their organisations and because people have finite resources, some progress map would be universally important to everyone.”*

Time. Deployable time emerged from the interviews as both a support and potential stressor during transition. All expressed gratitude at having more time to complete tasks. Many took the opportunity to spend time with the children, complete house renovations, travel, exercise, cook and read. However, many mentioned guilt, the conflict that they felt between spending time like this and the feeling that 'I should be job-hunting'. A common question was whether they should start job-hunting immediately or take a break beforehand. Structuring their time was also important.

Explicit awareness of coping processes. Participants depicted outplacement as offering opportunities to develop and enhance emotional and behavioural coping strategies. For example, where participants showed insight about their coping, they

started to feel that they could take something out of the process that might lead to sustained change. At this point, where participants began to show insight into their coping, they spoke about career transition as a positive experience and many found the naming of resistances and personal preconceptions reassuring. Fay described her experience in an unemployment office as follows: *“What I learnt was that it wasn't as bad as I thought. I was always scared of being unemployed ...but people were very nice; when I started sobbing in their office they reassured me, saying that it happened to all kinds of people. It allowed me to take stock, to position myself to bounce back. Suddenly I wasn't under water anymore; it's as if I had space in front of me and I could decide what to do with that space.”*

Concurrent Stressors/Support

A number of themes emerged during career transition as both supports and stressors including finances, partner support and expectations, health status and the job and economic market. Sarah, the wife of the couple interviewed (where the husband faced redundancy), felt that finances and social support were the most important. Finances were a key stressor, a finding reported by numerous unemployment studies (Kinicki, Prussia, & McKee-Ryan, 2000; Wanberg, Kanfer & Rotunda, 1999). In our study, for some of the participants, their comfortable pre-retrenchment financial situation and large redundancy payout provided them with a sense of security and comfort.

Sarah described the role she played in reinforcing her partner's self-esteem, a role mentioned by many participants of their partners. Sarah shows the psychological impact of job loss extends beyond merely losing a job. *“There were times when his morale would just dip and I had to constantly have these pep talks about 'there always been something around the corner ... then you will be the one who will pick the best one for you'... to keep him motivated. That was my job; to make sure that he was okay ...*

There was no time for self-pity; why did they do this to me? No. That was me.” Not all participants, however, felt this degree of partner support. One participant described arriving home only hours after he was given notice to his partner asking him whether he had contacted any recruiters. For him, partner expectations increased rather than buffered the stress associated with job loss, despite their financial comfort. Overall, when those around them were perceived as supportive, participants made significant personal changes.

Discussion

We propose that the Career Transition Model (CTM) presented here, which incorporates personal and contextual features, answers the questions addressed in this study: what factors contribute to optimal transitions through and following the retrenchment process? What should outplacement provide to optimise participants’ experience of career transition? From both an individual and outplacement company perspective, optimal career transition consists of guiding the individual through the phases of the transition until they are positioned to move into their next career stage. Our findings and model identify precursors, contextual features and potential concurrent stressors that impact on an individual's progress through the core phases of career transition. Knowledge and awareness of these features will be useful for individuals going through career transition, as well as career consultants and outplacement companies. We outline these features by core transition stage below.

Separation

For individuals, situational antecedents such as having a fall-back job, a secure financial situation and social support are important. The findings suggest that the most significant personal factor optimising personal change was the degree of psychological mindedness. Individuals with higher levels of psychological mindedness reflected on

their manner of viewing themselves, the meaning they accorded to work, their attitude to work and what work had required of them. The ability to negotiate a secure, positive exit is important and can be developed in the separation phase. While loyalty and mutual respect in the workplace are important, to de-personalise the job-loss impact on re-employability esteem, a career consultant may need to facilitate a shift in an individual's pre-retrenchment philosophy of work - it may be important to differentiate a 'jobs -for-now' perspective as being more adaptive than the traditional 'gold-watch' theory of work in the post GFC employment landscape.

For managers and human resources professionals, socially responsible and compassionate behaviour is an essential component in optimising career transition, particularly for those individuals who will see this as a violation of the mutuality and respect that is inherent in their view of employment. For outplacement providers, partnering with the human resources team at the point of separation ensures that the news is delivered appropriately and provides support for the individuals delivering the news, if required. Outplacement providers also need to consider their consultant-participant pairing process, and the quality and nature of the preparatory outline they provide participants for the coming physical and emotional journey. The model can serve as a general template that can be tailored to individual experiences and positioning.

Transition

From the individual's perspective, hallmarks of this phase are a positive re-framing of the situation and a re-appraising of the role and importance of work in their lives. Individual responses to questions about the role of work in their lives are contingent upon both the concurrent stressors and the contextual processes in their lives. Most individuals experience some degree of uncertainty, loss of confidence and confusion during this phase as they begin both their conceptual and concrete career exploration. In transition, both the career consultant and the outplacement agency

provide the structure and stability that individuals require as well as practical and emotional support.

Career consultants play a significant role in supporting individuals to re-appraise their pre-retrenchment period. Since we found, in accord with Seligman (1990), that agency and employability esteem are optimised with the attribution of job loss to external factors, it is important that individuals acknowledge the role of contextual factors in job loss. This is one message that our model has for consultants. A second focus for career consultants and other support people is that, while individuals may possess a given level of psychological mindedness, it is desirable to scaffold certain forms of reflection. This will provoke the individual to wholeheartedly embrace a re-evaluation of their career-position. To evaluate psychological mindedness in a person who is transitioning between careers, consultants might listen for markers such as verbalisation of 'job loss', emotion words related to job loss, grief, shame, and observe the degree of openness involved in viewing job loss as an opportunity.

The adaptive cognitive style associated with high PM participants facilitates psychological adjustment rather than regression. Therefore, in the outplacement context, the participant's ability to employ emotional and cognitive resources, allows them to better collaborate with their career consultant. Unlike their high PM counterparts, low PM individuals find it difficult to deal with interpretative work, instead requiring their outplacement consultant to create a non-ambiguous framework which clearly outlines goals and directives. Thus, for low PM individuals, concrete rather than abstract and metaphorical interventions are more appropriate. Therefore, it is important that consultants carefully tailor their coaching sessions to participants' cognitive strengths and limitations, with particular attention to their capacity for psychological mindedness.

Reincorporation

When career transition is grounded in positive precursors, contextual features, and a sufficiently changed view of self-at-work, an individual's progression to the reincorporation phase is more effective. Indeed, the successful re-examination of conceptions of work, and an acceptance of the new conceptions of work implied by the present employment context, mobilises the reincorporation process. This process enables individuals to develop an agentic job-search strategy exemplified in taking hold of the opportunity, developing an ongoing sense of agency, enjoyment of challenge, and sustaining a work-life balance that will prevent future burnout. In other words, it is not merely a change of job but a changed view of self that is reflected in the new ways of thinking, feeling and living.

Practical implications

A practical question emerges from our findings: how might a consultant work with someone who evidences a lack of psychological mindedness? Our findings suggest that optimal career transition may be achieved, even for those who are less psychologically minded, through careful scaffolding of the experience of job loss, including attempts to:

- Create a safe space for individuals to name the feelings associated with job-loss;
- Introduce the notion that humiliation is more likely to be experienced if one has a gold-watch theory of employment and encourage them to depersonalise the loss;
- Provide the guidance to re-frame and re-work attitudes to employment to fit the current context that individuals will be re-entering;
- Encourage participants to take the time to see whether they were burnt out prior to job loss and to get healthy habits in place;
- Highlight the possibility of changing oneself, rather than just changing jobs;
- Alert participants to the benefits and potential burdens of social support and help them to address this.

This study suggests that the outplacement experience should provide the following features to ensure an optimal transition: conversations with career consultants that include psychological support, maintaining boundaries between work and home, access to office facilities and job-search skills training. The most beneficial component of outplacement support was reported to be conversations with career consultants, an additional question therefore is: what consultant attributes, skills, experience and attitudes are required to facilitate transition? Based on the present study, these might include: the capacity to ask powerful questions, openness, professional credibility, a personal capacity for psychological mindedness and an ability to discern the degree to which that is present in the participant, and the recognition that, given support during transitions, individuals can reinvent themselves.

Limitations of the study

The design of the study targeted lived experience, and thus, has several limitations when viewed from other research perspectives. While personal interviews yielded rich, in-depth data of a qualitative nature, the results can only be generalised to other potential populations by keeping in mind the nature of the sample: they were not on the breadline, and all except three participants had been offered redundancy packages and structured outplacement support.

The researcher was a consultant with the outplacement company used in the study, as well as the interviewer. To maximise objectivity, the co-researcher [DM], who had no experience with outplacement prior to this study, independently coded all transcripts, to guard against interpretation bias and a theory-driven analysis of the interview transcripts. Additionally, this coder [DM] intentionally avoided reading directly relevant existing literature prior to analysing the interviews.

For this sample at least, there were no experiential differences that hinged on gender. This may well be different in other cohorts, which would be a fruitful avenue of further research. In addition, while the sample size is ten people, in qualitative analysis, the unit of sampling is experience and this sample has had diverse experiences of job loss. Further study might also explore whether the experiential discoveries remain once the individual recommences work.

Conclusion

This study offers an extended model of the transition process that people negotiate in their different ways as a result of losing their job and going through outplacement. It offers outplacement professionals ways of noting the unique strengths and areas of support needed by different participants as they navigate their way to a new role and vision of self-in-work.

Schlossberg et al.'s (1995) seminal research into career transitions provided a guide to analysing personal and environmental assets and deficits in any given transition. The findings presented in this study add to, and update, their work to a world that has changed. Our career transition model charts the way for different people. Thus, we suggest that people who already had, prior to being made redundant, a jobs-for-now work philosophy, experience a better career transition, that psychologically minded people need less scaffolding to make use of the opportunity for change embedded in the retrenchment experience and their interaction with consultants to 'reincorporate' effectively, and that people with dependents may need to be able to talk to consultants about both the stresses and benefits of support.

Finally, we offer a model that is, in a way, the road map sought by one of our participants. We found it a useful way to discern who moved most successfully through a stressful transitional process and achieve a high re-employability esteem. The

researchers are currently using the model to generate a re-employability scale based on these findings. We hope to model the perceptions of departure from the previous workplace and separation from that role as employee; the nature of the emotional response to job-loss; and capacity to appraise the loss as a challenge; to use the consultant support and transition time as a chance to reconfigure the role of work in life. It is our hope that it will help service providers, companies downsizing and most of all – those facing the challenge of retrenchment.

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Transition from Study 2 to Study 3

Our qualitative research outlined above in Study 2 alerted us to an array of things that we wanted to consider systematically and across a wider array of participants; namely how work was viewed, how we might measure that elusive capacity to thrive in the face of involuntary job loss by using it as an opportunity to reconfigure work-life balance or ‘self-in-work’ as we will call it, and how to measure re-employment esteem psychometrically. To achieve this, we developed items which addressed those qualitative experiences of the conception of work, and employability esteem, and moved to a new methodology.

Study 3: The role of conception of work and subjective experience of career transition on re-employability esteem.

Introduction

Over the past three decades, the nature of the career and employment environment has altered dramatically in conjunction with large-scale layoffs, declines in major manufacturing industries, widespread mergers and acquisitions, increases in the number of dual wage-earning families, and major recessions (Biemann, Fasang, & Grunow, 2011; Kurz, Hillmert, & Grunow, 2006). There has been a move from careers typically involving long-term, full-time employment within a single firm, to careers that are characterised by greater mobility across organisational and vocational domains (e.g., Arthur, 1994; Hall & Moss, 1998; Haynie & Shepherd, 2011). As a consequence of economic changes, retrenchment has become a salient and challenging feature of the current landscape, where 'career' is being radically redefined (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008). In this changing world of work, the traditional “notions of cradle-to-grave job security” (Mirvis & Hall, 1994, p.366) which valued company-centred loyalty and commitment have been replaced by a ‘jobs-for-now culture’. To handle the shift in the psychological contract at work, individuals are required to develop the kind of ‘metacompetencies’ that allow for inter-organisational mobility and increased vocational independence (Hall, 2004). In this environment, individuals must take ownership of their own careers and engage in self-directed career management, taking a more adaptable approach to employment (Capelli, 1999; Clarke and Patrickson, 2007). To encourage and enable individuals to negotiate the retrenchment process and successfully enter this changed employment context, large organisations often provide retrenchees with outplacement or career transition support (Arslan, 2005; Westaby, 2004).

Outplacement purports to reduce the impact of job loss on the individual, speed the process of reemployment, and decrease the likelihood of lawsuits targeting the downsizing organisation (Westaby, 2004). With the burgeoning of outplacement services over the last two decades, empirical research assessing the effectiveness of outplacement programs and services is important and necessary (Wanberg & Hough, 1996). Few outplacement evaluation studies have been conducted (Kozlowski et al., 1993; Leana and Ivancevich, 1987; Leana and Feldman, 1992;). However, initial evaluation results show that, in general, outplacement may help to improve the morale of unemployed individuals and increase the speed and quality of reemployment. Outplacement purports to minimise the negative impacts of unemployment and improve the likelihood and quality of re-employment (Martin & Lekan, 2008; Wanberg & Hough, 1996) yet how outplacement interventions support individuals going through career transition still remains unclear.

Is Career Transition (CT) experienced differentially by individuals and are different aspects of outplacement services differentially beneficial to individuals? To answer these questions, Faure & McIlwain (2012) interviewed ten individuals to identify how they defined the key components of CT and also what helped them to navigate their transition from one role to the next. By determining these components, they were able to outline a Career Transition Model (CTM) and suggest how outplacement professionals could maximise their support to help participants achieve successful career transitions. Their CTM was based on Van Gennep's Rites of Passage (1908) which defines the key phases of transition as separation, transition and reincorporation. They suggested that when career transition is supported by positive precursors and contextual features, and a jobs-for-now view of work, an individual is well placed to re-examine the assumptions which underlie his/her career identity and idea of career success, to embrace a career which is more congruent with his/her sense

of self-at-work. They suggested that Psychological Mindedness (PM), a cognitively toned personality factor characterised by “a willingness to try to understand self and others, a belief in the benefits of discussing one’s problems, openness to new ideas, and access to one’s feelings” (Conte, Ratto, & Karasu, 1996. p.251), underpinned this transformative process. They also proposed that the features that contribute to a positive progression through CT could be captured in a construct they called Re-employability Esteem (RES).

RES describes a proactive and emotionally positive attitude characterised by a clear and agentic vision of one’s career and life. The first research aim of the present study is to better understand what constitutes RES as a key factor of career transition success. To do this, outplacement participants were asked to complete a survey measuring their experiences of different features of CT. The second aim is to report the psychometric properties of the RES scale(s). We then present the theoretical variables related to employability and present the CTM from which we generated items for the RES. We follow by introducing psychological mindedness and outline our interpretation of the meaning and importance of Conception of Work (CW) in career transition. The authors develop a CW scale to capture where individuals position themselves on a CW spectrum between a traditional ‘gold-watch’ and ‘jobs-for-now’ Conception of Work based on the findings from an earlier study (Faure & McIlwain, 2012). Finally, we discuss resilience and general self-efficacy which are known to be associated with effective career transition.

Theoretical constructs related to Re-employability Esteem

Employability. Fugate, Kinicki and Ashforth (2004) argue that individuals who are more employable are less harmed by the event of job loss, engage in more job-search activity, and achieve higher quality reemployment. Even though employability can include both objective and subjective elements (Clarke & Patrickson, 2007; Fugate

et al., 2004; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006), the present study focuses on the subjective dimension defined by Fugate et al. (2004) and used by McArdle, Waters, Briscoe and Hall (2007) and De Vos, De Hauw and Van der Heijden (2011). Broadly defined, employability refers to an individual's ability to find a job, retain a job and move between jobs and/or industries should the need arise (Clarke & Patrickson, 2007). In Fugate et al's., (2004) model, employability is decoupled from an individual's employment status and showcases the individual's role in determining their own employability. They define employability as "a psycho-social construct that subsumes a host of person-centred constructs that combine synergistically" (p.15) to help workers adapt to work-related change. Employability comprises of three dimensions: (1) adaptability; (2) career identity; and (3) human and social capital (Fugate et al., 2004). Adaptability is the willingness and ability to change behaviours, feelings and thoughts in response to environmental demands. Career identity represents the way that individuals define themselves in the career context, and can be conceptualised as a 'cognitive compass' used to navigate career opportunities. Human capital refers to the personal variables that may affect one's career advancement, including education, work experience, training, skills, and knowledge. Social capital reflects the interpersonal aspect of employability, with reference to formal and informal career-related networks.

Existing scales of 'employability' (e.g. Fugate et al., 2004; Rothwell & Arnold, 2007; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006) de-emphasise the emotional feature of employability which is an important and under studied component of career transition (Kidd, 2004). Faure and McIlwain's (2012) study of individuals' lived experience of retrenchment and outplacement found that individuals' 'adaptability' was activated by a positive and proactive attitudinal stance which empowered them to claim ownership of their career decisions. In an outplacement context, this self-directedness helped these individuals to uncover the 'why' of their career choices, and reinvent themselves to fit

the current employment context. We describe this as *Re-employability Esteem* and suggest that it defines an individual's positive self-evaluation that s/he has a proactive and agentic role in the framing of work within his or her life. One of the aims of the present study is to define and measure the construct of RES, to take the concept into a new methodology and sample a broader array of participants.

Career Transition Model (CTM). According to Van Gennep (1908), 'Rites of Passage' describe the way that people move through life's stages in three distinct phases; *separation* – departure from identity-sustaining roles and responsibilities, *transition* - a liminal phase where one is not what one was nor yet what one will become; and *reincorporation* - the reintegration of the person into his/her new role in the community, with a new set of expectations. In a career transition context, Faure and McIlwain (2012) found that non-linear, interdependent rites of passage were more or less well-negotiated, depending on a number of contextual and concurrent influences and processes. The CTM they subsequently developed provided a basis from which to draw the RES items and served as a framework to evaluate individuals' navigation through CT. The authors found that individuals who navigated through CT most effectively, that is, they maintained a high Re-employability Esteem irrespective of their job status were those who demonstrated PM as experienced by the outplacement consultant and as evidenced by certain indices in their account of their transition experience e.g. the capacity to name job loss, to see the transition as offering a chance to re-appraise themselves as well as their jobs.

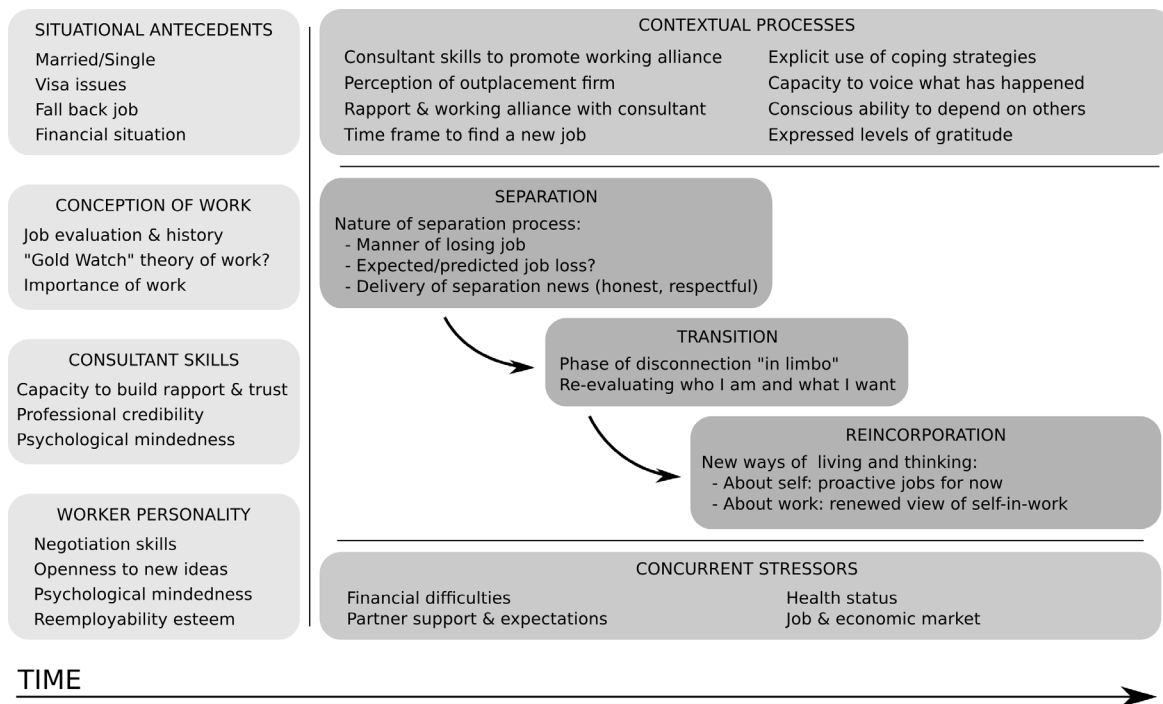


Figure 1: Career Transition Model: Core Rites of Passage, Precursors and

Context

Psychological Mindedness. Faure and McIlwain (2012) found that PM individuals employed PM to manage the various personal and contextual features of their career transition and to progress through the career transition rites of passage in a demonstrably richer and more meaningful way than others. They also found that these individuals were more able and open to reappraising their sense of self-at-work and were subsequently more likely to change their Conception of Work. We have included the PM scale in the present study and expect that PM will be positively associated with Re-employability Esteem (Hypothesis 1). In addition, PM individuals were those who were most open to reassessing their assumptions about the importance of work in their lives and were willing to reflect on and discuss this with their consultant (Faure & McIlwain, 2012). One of the aims of outplacement is to update participants' awareness of the current job market which has increasingly been associated with a 'jobs-for-now' perspective of work. We suggest that PM makes it easier for individuals to reassess their

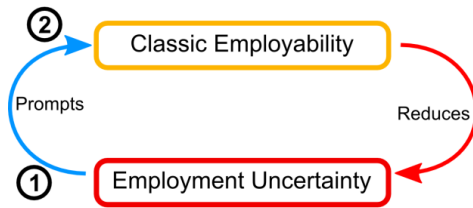
relationship to work and, in doing so, helps them improve their Re-employability Esteem in reference to the current job market. Thus, we anticipate that a ‘jobs-for-now’ conception of work will be positively associated with Re-employability Esteem (Hypothesis 2) and that PM moderates the influence of Conception of Work on Re-employability Esteem (Hypothesis 3).

Conception of Work/ Career Identity. For Fugate et al. (2004), career identity, the second dimension of employability, relates to the valuations people make of their career experiences, which then motivates future career decisions (Fugate et al., 2004; Fugate and Kinicki, 2008). Career identity necessarily reflects the individual’s personal values and career interests as opposed to a particular job or company (Hall et al., 1997). For many individuals, the salience of career identity is an important determinant of well-being and future job satisfaction in relation to a job loss (Gowan, 2012). Faure and McIlwain (2012) noticed that individuals entered the retrenchment process with diverse and varying conceptions of the meaning and centrality of work to their lives. They found that Conception of Work was an important determinant of the quality of an individual’s career transition experience. They referred to the shift in the employment contract as ‘gold-watch’ and ‘jobs-for-now’ to capture the shift from ‘relational contracts’ – characterised by company-specific skills, long-term career development, and extensive training – to ‘transactional contracts’, which focus on short-term financial relationships and involve low emotional commitment by employees (Rousseau & Parks, 1993). This occurs because employees shift their emphasis from job security within one organisation to employment security on the labour market (e.g. Anderson & Schalk, 1998).

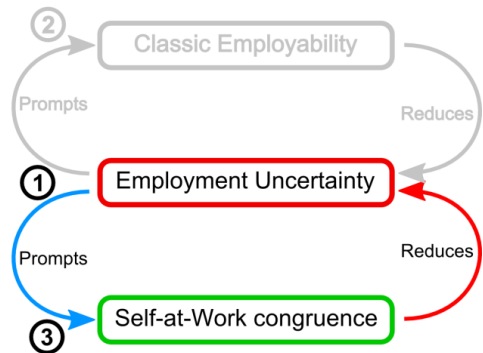
Faure and McIlwain’s (2012) findings suggested that individuals who held a ‘jobs-for-now’ theory of work were advantageously placed for reemployment in a changed employment landscape. In the present study, the authors develop a Conception

of Work (CW) scale to capture where individuals situate themselves between a traditional 'gold watch' and a transactional 'jobs-for-now' view of work. This binary conception on a linear scale is not the whole story of the conception of work domain, as Figure 2, borrowed from Systems Thinking (Senge, 1990), illustrates. The natural tendency of people faced with redundancy, or more broadly with employment uncertainty, is to work on classic employability skills such as networking, resume, interview skills, in order to find another job as soon as possible. This short term solution to the problem of employment uncertainty will result in increased employability, and therefore, in a decrease in employment uncertainty. However, it results in the bypassing of another more fundamental or systemic solution to the problem of employment uncertainty which relates to congruence between self and work. This solution is potentially more powerful, but also involves greater personal investment. Some individuals face a dilemma. Since the short-term solution (to develop classic employability skills) is easier to implement, it can lead to a more instrumental view of work (the 'jobs-for-now' view) which makes the implementation of the more fundamental solution (to develop a more congruent view of self-at-work) more difficult, and therefore, less likely. Based on this CW dynamic, we suggest that people with a jobs-for-now CW will have more difficulty with the capacity to reappraise 'self-at-work' because this work philosophy leads to a more instrumental view of work, which potentially masks the benefits of a deeper reconsideration of the role of work in their lives.

Problem: employment uncertainty.
 Short-term solution: develop stronger classic employability.
 Employment uncertainty will reduce for a while, but may come back.



Problem: employment uncertainty.
 Systemic solution: develop stronger Self-at-Work congruence.
 Employment uncertainty will take time to reduce, but is less likely to come back.



Systemic solution will take effort to implement.
 Danger: in the meantime, the short-term solution may create a perception (an instrumental view of work) that masks the systemic solution and makes it less likely.

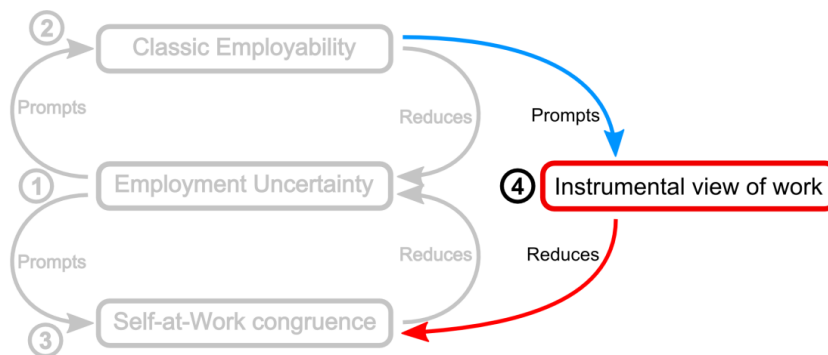


Figure 2: A systems view of Conception of Work dynamics

Resilience and General Self-Efficacy. According to the protective factor model of resilience (O’Leary, 1998), resilient attitudes and personal competence function as protective factors which reduce negative outcomes and promote successful transition through adversity by ameliorating the stress of job loss (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Individuals who possess these resilient qualities and positive orientation are able to modulate extreme responses to adversity and positively reconstruct their life position while remaining psychosocially involved (Demos, 1989). We have included measures of resilience in the present study to explore the links between features of resilience and (re)employability. Fugate and Kinicki (2008) include career resilience as a personal

characteristic of an active and adaptable dispositional employability and work-identity. Fugate, Kinicki and Ashforth (2004) have shown that resilient individuals have positive self-evaluations in terms of their work and thus, construe a stressful situation as an opportunity rather than a threat. In addition, resilient individuals attribute career success to personal ability and effort, without personalising reasons for career failures or missteps (Brockner & Chen, 1996). We expect resilient individuals to view career changes as challenges and as opportunities to learn, and to persist in the pursuit of desired outcomes and goals (Carver & Scheier, 1994, Chen & Lim, 2012).

A measure of General Self-Efficacy (GSE) was included in the present study to capture the non-personal agency features that differentiate general self-efficacy from resilience. GSE explicitly refers to personal agency or the belief that one's actions are responsible for successful outcomes. Judge, et al. (1998) defined general self-efficacy as “individuals’ perception of their ability to perform across a variety of different situations” (p. 170). GSE is predictive of positive career related choices and performance (Hackett & Lent, 1992) and relates to average levels of job-search intensity over time (Wanberg, Glomb, Song & Sorenson, 2005). Following Sherer et al., (1982) we expect that GSE will be activated when individuals encounter new situations or novel tasks, in this case job loss and subsequent career transition. While individuals who are resilient and possess high levels of GSE are better placed to cope with career transition, our qualitative study suggests that Re-employability Esteem adds a distinct and positive dimension to our understanding of CT. Therefore, we expect that Re-employability Esteem will be distinguishable but positively associated with GSE and resilience (Hypothesis 4).

To summarise, then, our specific research aim is to construct a scale that measures Re-employability Esteem to better understand what constitutes RES and the

role it plays in CT success. Our specific hypotheses in relation to Re-employability Esteem are:

- That psychological mindedness will be positively associated with Re-employability Esteem (H1).
- That a jobs-for-now Conception of Work will be positively associated with Re-employability Esteem (H2).
- That psychological mindedness will moderate the influence of Conception of Work on Re-employability Esteem (H3).
- That Re-employability Esteem is distinguishable from General Self-Efficacy and Resilience but positively associated with these constructs (H4).

Method

Sample and Procedure

One hundred and eighty-one participants were recruited from a Sydney outplacement firm by email, from the researchers' networks, and from placing study details and url on LinkedIn and the Australian Psychological Society's research page. Surveys were sent to outplacement participants who were recorded as having completed outplacement programs between January 2011 and the beginning of December 2012. The email informed them of the purpose of the study and what participation would entail and that the survey would take about thirty minutes to complete. All participants were asked to complete and sign an online Information Letter and Consent Form which informed them that they could withdraw from the study at any time and that the information they provided would be anonymous. There was no overlap between participants in this study and those in Study 1 or Study 2.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

<i>Variable</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Variable</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Age (years)			Occupational Status		
21-26	1	0.6%	Other	4	2.2%
27-40	41	23.7%	Sales	4	2.2%
41-54	99	57.2%	Clerical/Administrative	24	12.9%
55-66	32	18.5%	Technical	6	3.2%
Gender			Professional	61	32.8%
Female	100	55.2%	Managerial	87	46.8%
Male	81	44.8%	Financial Difficulty		
Marital Status			Not at all difficult	76	41.1%
Single	29	15.7%	Somewhat difficult	45	24.3%
Married	114	61.6%	Neutral	43	23.2%
Divorced	12	6.5%	Very difficult	11	5.9%
Widowed	4	2.2%	Extremely difficult	10	5.4%
De Facto	26	14.1%	Time Unemployed		
Education (years)			Less than 1 month	43	23.5%
Up to 12	26	14.5%	1-6 months	64	35.0%
12-15	40	22.3%	More than 6 months	76	41.5%
15-18	69	38.5%	Time Since Redundancy		
Over 18	44	24.6%	Less than 6 months	35	18.9%
			6 months to 1 year	51	27.6%
			1-2 years	72	38.9%
			More than 2 years	27	14.6%

As shown in Table 1, three quarters of the sample were over 40 years old and more than half were married. There was almost an equal gender balance. More than half of the sample was highly educated and either professionals or managers and 45% indicated that work had been the most important thing in their lives. A relatively small number, 11%, indicated they were in financial difficulty.

Measures

Perceived financial difficulty. Perceived financial difficulty was assessed by a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = 'not at all difficult' to 5 = 'extremely difficult') with the item: "How difficult is it for you to live on your total present household income?" This item was included, as financial difficulty has been shown to determine an unemployed

individual's attitude toward job seeking (Vinokur & Caplan, 1987). Participants were also asked how many dependents they were supporting.

Duration of unemployment. Participants were asked how long they had been, or stayed unemployed after their retrenchment, when they had been retrenched, and whether they had ever experienced voluntary job loss.

Conception of Work Scale. A 12-item Conception of Work Scale was created to measure the degree to which participants held a 'job-for-now' versus 'gold-watch' Conception of Work. Items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = 'strongly disagree' to 5 = 'strongly agree'. For example, "Loyalty to a business for one's working life is a thing of the past", "Proactive job mobility matters more than loyalty to an employer these days" or "Employees need to look out for their own interests rather than assume this is being done by the organisation they work for. Three items were reverse-scored (2, 9 and 10). Possible scores range from 12 to 60, with higher scores indicating a jobs-for-now Conception of Work. The Cronbach's alpha was .78 which is good.

Resilience Scale. Resilience was measured using a 15-item short version (RS15) of Wagnild and Young's (1993) Resilience Scale. Niall and Dias (2001) derived this shorter version from a factor analysis of the original scale and reported a Cronbach's alpha of .91. All items are positively worded and scored on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = 'strongly disagree' and 5 = 'strongly agree'. For example: "My belief in myself is what gets me through hard times." Possible scores range from 15 to 75, with higher scores indicating higher levels of resilience. In the present study the Cronbach's alpha was .94.

Psychological Mindedness Scale (PMS; Conte & Ratto, 1997). The 45-item PMS was created to assess patient suitability for psychodynamic psychotherapy. Forty-

four items were included in the present study¹. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = 'strongly agree' to 5 = 'strongly disagree'); 20 items were reverse-scored, and an individual's score on the scale was the sum of all item responses. Higher scores indicated a greater PM. Conte et al., (1990) report good internal reliability (coefficient alpha = .87). In the present study the Cronbach's alpha was .85.

The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1993). This is a 10-item scale that is designed to assess optimistic self-beliefs to cope with a variety of difficult demands in life and was included as a control measure. Participants are asked to rate their beliefs about the goals they set for themselves on a 1 – 4 Likert scale; 'not at all true' (1), 'hardly true' (2), 'moderately true' (3) and 'exactly true' (4). Questions were positively worded and include, "I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough" or "I am confident that I could deal effectively with unexpected events." In the present study the Cronbach's alpha was .86.

Results

Scale development began with a theoretically based pool of 55 items, based on the conceptual model shown in Figure 1 above. The items were generated to capture individuals' states of mind, subjective experiences and emotional responses to the different phases of career transition. We were interested in evaluating the role, experience and impact of emotion in career transition which has been less studied in career research (Kidd, 2004).

Before conducting the exploratory factor analysis, all the items were screened for univariate outliers. Three out-of-range values were identified and removed. The minimum amount of data for factor analysis was not satisfied, however, having approximately three respondents per item was deemed acceptable, in light of the fact that 21 of the theoretically-derived items were deleted as it became apparent in the

¹ Authorial error

course of analysis that they did not, in fact, theoretically connect with the transitional process of Career Transition. Our conceptions of CT had sharpened between generating the item pool and analysing the data. Examples of the deleted items are given below in section X. Twenty one items were then eliminated, either because they did not load onto the three factors, because they failed to meet a minimum criteria of having a primary factor loading of .4 or above and no cross-loading of .3 or above (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996), or because they did not contribute to the conceptual precision of the factor structure. Examples of the removed items include, “I am typically a ‘glass half empty type of person’”, “I am lucky that I always land on my feet” and “I feel sorry for some of the people I meet who I know will find it hard to secure a new job” and “Regular exercise has helped me deal better with this situation.” The final factor analysis is based on 34 items with a sample size of 181. A principal components analysis (PCA) with an oblimin rotation was conducted as the components are proposed to be interrelated. Data were first tested for suitability for PCA. The correlation matrix was inspected for correlation coefficients of .3 and above, which were found in a substantial number of instances. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .8, above the recommended value of .60 (Pallant, 2001, p. 161), and the Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant at $p = 0.001$.

Principal components analysis revealed the presence of 17 components with eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 71.5% of the variance. An inspection of the screeplot shown in Figure 3, revealed a clear break after the fourth component.

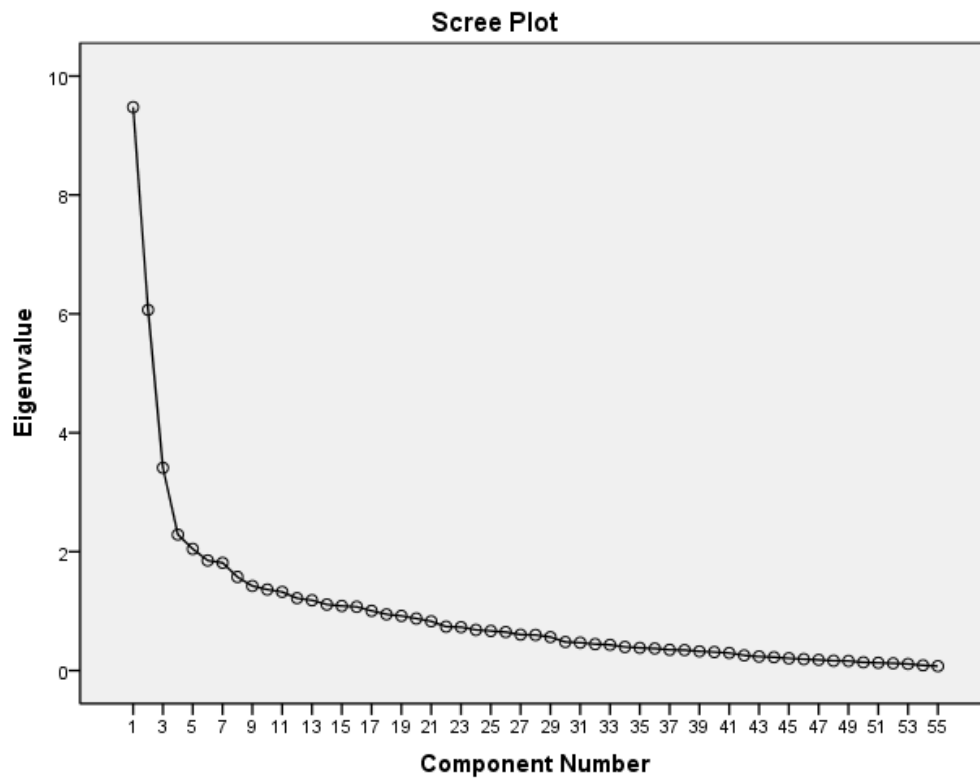


Figure 3: Screeplot of the Principal Components Analysis

As shown in Table 2, the four-component solution explained a total of 38.6% of the variance. Three and four factor solutions were examined using a direct oblimin rotation of the factor loading matrix. The three rotated components accounted for 34.4% of the total variance (respectively 17.2%, 11% and 6.2%) and a three-component solution was preferred because of its previous theoretical support, and the insufficient number of primary loadings and difficulty of interpreting the fourth factor.

Table 2

Total Variance Explained by the Four Extracted Components of the Re-employability Esteem Items

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	9.477	17.230	17.230	9.477	17.230	17.230
2	6.067	11.031	28.262	6.067	11.031	28.262
3	3.411	6.202	34.464	3.411	6.202	34.464
4	2.287	4.158	38.622	2.287	4.158	38.622

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

The Correlation Matrix, Means, and Standard Deviations, the Structure Matrix and Pattern Matrix for the 34 items are presented in Appendices A to C.

As shown below in Table 3, from the remaining 34 items in three factors, three scales were created: ‘redundancy response’ (Response), ‘capacity for reappraisal’ (Reappraisal), and ‘perception of separation’ (Separation). The *Response* dimension essentially describes how participants responded emotionally to their redundancy, and how they initially viewed the experience. The *Response* scale items include, “My view of self plummeted completely”, or “Initially, loss of control was what I found most difficult to deal with.” The *Reappraisal* scale evaluates how participants reflected on, made sense of and learned from their experience, and how their appraisal of that experience transformed their view of self and work. Capacity for reappraisal items include, “I feel more comfortable with uncertainty than before my redundancy” or “My personal well-being has improved and I am confident it will stay high in my new job.” The *Separation* scale describes participants’ views of their separation from the organisation which made them redundant, with items designed to ascertain the perceived fairness of the separation. *Separation* scale items include, “Internal politics did not play a part in my redundancy”, and “I believe that my organisation was telling me the truth about my redundancy.”

Table 3

Component Correlations and Alpha Coefficients for the Re-employability Esteem Scale(s)

Components	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	Alpha
1 Re-employability Esteem (N=34) ⁽¹⁾	110.982	16.910	1				0.87
2 <i>Separation Scale</i> (N=7)	20.678	7.259	.685**	1			0.85
3 <i>Response Scale</i> (N=13)	56.350	12.034	.797**	.386**	1		0.86
4 <i>Reappraisal Scale</i> (N=14)	54.994	9.568	.667**	.249**	.201**	1	0.89

⁽¹⁾. Re-employability Esteem is the total scale, of which 2, 3 and 4 are the subscales.

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The 34-item Re-employability Esteem scale (RES) was constructed from the sum of the *Separation*, *Response* and *Reappraisal* scales above. As mentioned earlier, we were particularly interested in 2 of the 3 subscales forming RES, the *Response* and *Reappraisal* scales corresponding, respectively, to individuals' emotional response to their job loss and their capacity to reappraise their self-at-work. Possible RES scores range from 34 to 170, with higher scores indicating a fair appraisal of separation, better emotional response to the redundancy, greater capacity for reappraisal and as a result a higher Re-employability Esteem. Twenty-five items were reverse scored and all items were scored on a 5-point scale, 1 = 'definitely true' to 5 = 'definitely untrue'.

To explore the influence of the demographic characteristics of the sample on the main study variables, preliminary analyses using PAWS 18 were run to examine the associations between demographic variables (sex, age, years of education, occupation, time since redundancy, duration of unemployment and financial difficulty) and the main variables of interest in this study (Resilience, General self-efficacy, Psychological Mindedness, Conception of Work and Re-employability Esteem). The results showed a significant negative Spearman's correlation between occupational category and gender ($X^2 = -.21, p < .01$) indicating that men's occupational status was higher than women's. Education level was also negatively associated with gender ($X^2 = -.19, p < .05$) indicating that men were slightly more educated than women in the sample. There was a small but significant positive association between occupational status and level of resilience ($r = .18, p < .05$) suggesting that the higher occupational groups (e.g. managers and professionals) were moderately more resilient than lower occupational groups (e.g. clerical, administrative, sales and other). Not surprisingly, level of education was significantly and positively associated with occupational status ($X^2 = .27, p < .01$) indicating that those participants in higher occupational status groups also

tended to be more educated. Years of education was also significantly associated with Conception of Work ($r = .30, p < .01$) reflecting that highly educated individuals were more likely to have a jobs-for-now Conception of Work than were those who were less educated. Not surprisingly, age was negatively associated with Conception of Work ($r = -.17, p < .05$) indicating that older participants tended to have a ‘gold watch’ Conception of Work. The results showed that financial difficulty was negatively associated with Re-employability Esteem ($r = -.37, p = .01$).

As indicated in Table 4 below, preliminary results showed, as predicted, that PM was positively associated with RES. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported. Surprisingly, RES was negatively associated with CW suggesting that individuals with a ‘gold-watch’ CW have higher levels of RES than individuals with a ‘jobs-for-now’ view of work. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is not supported. RES was distinguishable yet positively associated with general self-efficacy and resilience, supporting Hypothesis 4. As one of the aims of the study was to better understand what constitutes RES and the role it plays in CT success, we also investigated the associations between the sub-scales and the main study variables. *Reappraisal* was most strongly associated with PM, slightly less strongly with resilience and was negatively associated with CW, that is, it was associated with a ‘gold-watch’ CW. *Response* was most strongly associated with GSE and resilience and less with PM. *Separation* was positively associated with resilience. CW was negatively associated with capacity for reappraisal and quality of separation suggesting that people with a ‘gold-watch’ CW reported a higher capacity for reappraisal and viewed their separation from their workplace as having been fairer than did those with a more jobs-for-now conception of work.

Table 4

Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations of the main study variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Mean	SD
1 Psychological Mindedness	1								160.42	12.728
2 Conception of Work	-.041	1							42.84	5.911
3 Resilience	.341**	-.134	1						60.58	8.749
4 General Self-Efficacy	.382**	-.025	.348**	1					32.32	3.656
5 Re-employability Esteem ⁽¹⁾	.359**	-.150	.443**	.421**	1				110.98	16.910
6 Separation Scale	.042	-.190*	.154*	.048	.423**	1			20.68	7.259
7 Response Scale	.292**	-.067	.447**	.453**	.829**	.386**	1		56.35	12.034
8 Reappraisal Scale	.259**	-.201**	.214**	.134	.715**	.249**	.201**	1	54.99	9.568

⁽¹⁾. Re-employability Esteem is the total scale, of which 6, 7 and 8 are the subscales.

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess whether psychological mindedness moderated the influence of CW on RES (Hypothesis 3). Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity. Each variable was centred upon the mean. PM and CW were entered at Step 1, explaining 12% of the variance in Re-employability Esteem $F, (2,145) = 9.86, p < .001$. After entry of the interaction term (psychological mindedness * Conception of Work) at Step 2, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 15%, $F (1, 144) = 8.16, p < .001$. The interaction between PM and CW explained an additional 3% of the variance in RES, after controlling for PM and CW, R squared change = .03, F change $(1,144) = 4.32, p = < .05$ which was significant. In the final model, both PM and CW and their interaction were significant, with PM recording a higher beta value ($beta = .27, p < .001$) than CW ($beta = -.17, p < .05$) and their interaction ($beta = .16, p < .05$). Thus, PM did significantly moderate the influence of CW on RES as predicted. Thus, Hypothesis 3 is supported.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to construct a scale that measures Re-employability esteem to better understand what constitutes RES and the role it plays in career transition success. Empirically, Re-employability Esteem consists of three components: perception of separation, an esteem-sustaining emotional response and subsequent reappraisal of job loss as an opportunity for realignment of self-in-work. The findings of the present study show that a perception of fair separation is associated with a positive emotional response and a capacity to reappraise and use the retrenchment experience to find a different meaning and purpose to their work and life.

A high score on the *emotional response scale* indicates a positive emotional response because the negative items were reverse scored. The *emotional response scale* was most highly associated with general self-efficacy and resilience which is not surprising given that, upon hearing the news of their job loss, individuals are required to manage their emotional reaction in order to engage with their career transition. We would expect individuals at this point to draw on their optimistic self-beliefs to cope with the job loss and their capacity to view career changes as challenges and opportunities to learn (Carver & Scheier, 1994, Chen & Lim, 2012). PM was also associated with *emotional response* although somewhat less strongly than either resilience or general self-efficacy. This finding shows that, in addition to resilience and general self-efficacy, the willingness and openness to reflect on the relationship between thoughts, feelings and actions is an important aspect of helping individuals to respond to the emotional disruption caused by job loss. The finding that PM is strongly correlated with resilience supports this interpretation and is evident in the following examples of the individual response scale items that were most strongly associated with PM: “I couldn’t deal with another major setback like this in my life”, “I often feel/think

that I, as a person and not just my role, have become redundant” and “My view of self plummeted completely.”

Our earlier qualitative research in study 2 suggested that PM also plays an important role in enabling individuals to reappraise their working identity, and pleasingly, we found using scales and a broader sample, that PM was strongly associated with capacity for reappraisal. The reappraisal dimension of RES differs from the other two factors in that it evaluates how participants reflected on, made sense of, and learned from, their experience, and how their appraisal of that experience transformed their view of self and work. Our qualitative study had led us to expect that psychologically minded participants would experience a better reincorporation, due partly to their capacity for re-appraisal in the form of better management of the ambiguity associated with the transition phase of career transition. Our finding that of all the main study variables, PM was the most strongly associated with capacity for reappraisal supports this suggestion. The individual items most highly associated with PM were “I am grateful for this experience”, “I have benefited from the support of others who are going through the same transition”, “It has been very helpful to speak with other people who have experienced a redundancy” and “Since experiencing role redundancy, I have reappraised how important work is to me.” Clearly, as we suggested in our qualitative study, participants with high PM were able, through conversation with others and their own reflective processes, to reframe their experience positively and emerge from the challenge of job loss with a clearer, and perhaps more chosen, view of the role of work in their lives.

The *separation* dimension describes participant's views of their separation from the organisation which made them redundant, with items designed to ascertain the perceived fairness of the separation. As indicated above, previous research has shown that the way in which separation is perceived impacts on the transition post-redundancy.

Not surprisingly, the present findings suggest that an individual's perception of their separation has a stronger influence on their *emotional response* to redundancy than to their capacity for reappraisal. Individuals who felt that their separation was unfair reported a poorer emotional response. As separation involves individuals coming to terms with sudden changes that have potentially far reaching implications, it was not surprising that it was also moderately associated with resilience.

We were surprised to find that individuals with a 'jobs-for-now' CW reported a less fair separation from their organisation, as we would have anticipated that employees with a 'gold watch' view of work would find the separation from their organisation more difficult. We had expected that those individuals who felt that loyalty to their employer was important would find separation less fair and hence more difficult. However, this unexpected finding of unfair views of separation and a jobs-for-now work conception underscores a possibility which we are not able to comment on without before and after retrenchment assessment of CW: namely that a person may adopt a 'jobs-for-now' perspective as a result of experiencing what they perceive to be an unfair retrenchment. There may have been a move from a gold watch view of work towards a more jobs-for now view *as a result* of perceived unfairness of retrenchment. Further research is required to consider whether this occurs. Exploring what is associated with a jobs-for-now view of work and whether the manner by which one comes to have a 'jobs-for-now' CW is important. If it is the result of disillusionment, it may conceivably negatively impact resilience, well-being and RES. We found that age was significantly associated with a 'gold-watch' CW. This is a surprising finding. Since these individuals may have had more experience of job loss or job change it would be possible for them to have come to accept retrenchment as a normal part of organisational life and to have adopted a jobs-for-now perspective on work. Future research would need to directly test frequency of job loss or job change rather than merely age to test this directly. In this

study age seems linked with a view of work as being based on loyalty and mutuality of respect.

CW (that is, being high on a ‘job-for-now’ perspective) was also negatively associated with RES, especially the *reappraisal scale*. However, we found a strong relationship between PM and RES and, that PM significantly moderated the influence of CW on RES as predicted. Therefore, individuals with a ‘gold-watch’ view of work had higher RES moderated by PM. The work dynamics diagram shown in Figure 3 might explain why. A ‘jobs-for-now’ work philosophy aims to increase classic employability which may concurrently diminish these individuals’ capacity to reconfigure their self-at-work; therefore, the capacity to reappraise and develop high RES is likely to be more difficult for these individuals. Alternatively, if we assume that people with a ‘gold-watch’ CW have more of their self-identity tied to work, then this finding may suggest that these individuals have more of a need to reappraise the role and centrality of work in their lives after job loss to maintain a healthy sense of self.

In developing the scale, we wanted to capture different perspectives of work that we believed would make career transition easier for individuals and signal to outplacement consultants where retrenchedes placed themselves on a CW spectrum. The CW scale we developed might simply be too narrow to capture an individual’s Conception of Work as we know that work is such a rich, multifaceted concept with its importance to people ranging from being self-actualising to transactional (Dejours, 2009). As a consequence, individuals may possess a ‘jobs-for-now’ CW while also valuing hard work for, and loyalty towards, their organisation. These individuals may not feel the need to reappraise their self-at-work as much as individuals with a ‘gold-watch’ conception because their view of work corresponds with current employment trends. Furthermore, the ‘jobs-for-now’ perspective was strongly associated with higher levels of education which provides support for Clarke & Patrickson’s (2008) finding

that the JFN perspective has primarily benefited employees with highly developed or high-demand skills. Taken together, these findings suggest that the CW construct needs further refinement. In particular, future research might examine this construct at different points in time, to evaluate if, and to what degree, an individual's view of work changes throughout the course of their career transition.

Directions for future research

The outcomes of this study provide fertile grounds for further research. For example, the CW construct deserves further attention as it attempts to assess the degree to which individuals are equipped to enter the changed employment landscape. Other constructs, such as worker identity, refer to the sense that people make of their career experiences and reflect the individual's personal values and career interests (Fugate et al., 2004; Fugate and Kinicki, 2008; Hall et al., 1997). As a consequence, it is a construct relating to the value or importance of work in one's life, rather than the particular CW they hold. To accommodate the possible covariance of 'gold-watch' and 'jobs-for-now' conceptions of work, we suggest that future research include two separate scales with additional and changed items that better capture the richness of the construct. In addition, given our suggestion that individuals are better served by changing their conception of work, future research should include a pre and post measure of CW to assess these changes. Further, including a time adjustment variable would provide the opportunity to test participants at different times allowing for changes in responses on the study variables. Longitudinal research would also provide valuable data to properly track the dynamic nature of the construct over time.

It is also important to keep in mind that our study involved one outplacement firm with participants from multiple companies which may limit the generalisability of the results somewhat. A further question of generalisability concerns the characteristics of those who returned the survey versus those participants who failed to do so. As is

true in most survey studies, we know very little about those who chose not to participate. An area of future research would be to conduct a follow-up study to determine the quality and status of individual's reemployment.

Conclusion

Corporate restructures and downsizing continue to be a corporate strategy used by many organisations, and it is one that affects more and more people. The refinement of our understanding of how to navigate CT at different levels is relevant and important. The present research has shown that CT needs to be viewed not only as a transactional experience or event, but as an opportunity for individuals to navigate and negotiate identity changes throughout CT. The value of the person-centred, psycho-social employability construct presented by Fugate et al. (2004) in an outplacement context is that it shows that one can be employable without necessarily being in employment and that it helps individuals and outplacement consultants recognise that the former's employability can be self-improved, despite the temporary absence of paid employment. The current study has confirmed the importance of a number of person-centred variables such as resilience and general self-efficacy in career transition. However, at another level, we have also shown that, in addition to these more widely researched constructs, psychological mindedness, or an individual's psychological constitution also permits them to use redundancy to better align their self-at-work. While we expected that Conception of Work, a more speculative construct, might tie these constructs together, more research is necessary to better understand and operationalise the construct as we suspect it has significance for CT management.

Finally, CT management is not merely managing the movement from one job to another but it is dependent on a number of factors, some of which are personality-based while some are psychologically and sociologically-derived. Thus, CT is not simply a transition between jobs, but an opportunity to optimally re-appraise the role of work in

life. That Re-employability Esteem (in the form of perception of separation, emotional response to job loss and reappraisal) is positively associated with resilience and generalised efficacy is of relevance to CT consultants, the outplacement industry and researchers alive to the changing face of work and its implications for well-being.

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Study 3 – Appendix A

Table 5

Correlation Matrix, Means, and Standard Deviations for the 34 Re-employability Esteem Items

Correlation Matrix		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	Mean	SD
1	I believe that my organisation was telling me the truth about my redundancy	1.00																	3.09	1.42
2	Internal politics did not play a part in my redundancy	.461	1.00																2.39	1.44
3	I felt the redundancy was the beginning of a positive new chapter	.369	.189	1.00															3.83	1.29
4	My family has been a source of anxiety	-.005	.091	.177	1.00														3.83	1.21
5	My view of self plummeted completely	.332	.202	.530	.193	1.00													3.61	1.37
6	Our financial situation has been a source of anxiety for me	.179	.173	.319	.351	.419	1.00												2.81	1.48
7	I have a clearer vision of where my life is going than I did prior to my redundancy	.124	.138	.355	.121	.211	.140	1.00											3.37	1.29
8	Since experiencing role redundancy, I have reappraised how important work is to me	.071	.034	.055	-.110	-.069	-.121	.366	1.00										3.98	1.14
9	Initially, loss of control was what I found most difficult to deal with	.134	.176	.254	.212	.383	.259	-.110	-.261	1.00									2.95	1.31
10	I feel that the decision to make my role redundant was unfair	.595	.483	.393	.090	.328	.157	.150	.025	.313	1.00								2.9	1.4
11	I have felt down more often than up since my role became redundant	.198	.180	.461	.273	.593	.408	.277	-.061	.286	.235	1.00							3.42	1.35
12	I often feel/think that I, as a person and not just my role, have become redundant	.262	.176	.364	.238	.576	.342	.177	-.048	.223	.226	.584	1.00						3.64	1.44
13	I have often felt under pressure from my partner to get a job	-.023	-.089	.026	.310	.134	.140	.063	-.019	.068	-.089	.195	.104	1.00					3.65	1.29
14	My closest relationships have been strained during this time	.165	-.011	.277	.327	.383	.280	.062	-.131	.180	.149	.486	.389	.517	1.00				3.65	1.29
15	I have found it important to talk to people outside of my close network about my transition	.050	.008	-.052	-.067	-.107	-.065	.115	.255	.041	-.004	-.034	-.132	-.041	-.123	1.00			3.64	1.2
16	Outplacement support has been useful/helpful to me during my transition	.232	.108	.158	.014	.059	.099	.185	.171	-.002	.124	.119	.164	.000	.041	.294	1.00		4.23	1.09
17	The redundancy package was too good to give up	.307	.280	.369	.082	.335	.350	.156	.106	.144	.362	.264	.154	-.038	.149	-.013	.189	1.00	3.47	1.3

Correlation Matrix		18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	Mean	SD
18	I feel like I was shafted	1.00																	2.78	1.5
19	The redundancy notice/process was handled fairly	.484	1.00																3.09	1.47
20	I feel there was mutual respect communicated during the redundancy notification process	.558	.670	1.00															2.96	1.42
21	It has been very helpful to speak with other people who have experienced a redundancy	-.011	-.108	.004	1.00														3.96	0.97
22	I have benefited from the support of others who are going through the same transition	.027	-.060	.034	.823	1.00													3.9	1.03
23	I am grateful for this experience	.265	.133	.176	.447	.497	1.00												3.7	1.23
24	It has been beneficial to have had the time and opportunity to think about who I am and what is important to me.	.306	.181	.302	.404	.508	.566	1.00											4.11	1.01
25	My future career/life will be different as a result of this experience	.081	-.020	.102	.319	.301	.223	.493	1.00										4.26	0.93
26	I feel more comfortable with uncertainty than before my redundancy	.271	.098	.205	.301	.383	.395	.573	.401	1.00									3.66	1.13
27	I feel fearful that my next role will be made redundant	.240	.145	.033	-.120	-.155	.118	.118	.071	.017	1.00								3.41	1.25
28	I couldn't deal with another major setback like this in my life	.203	.098	.056	-.027	.043	.239	.145	-.043	.122	.560	1.00							3.93	1.03
29	Sometimes you need to be patient and trust that something good is on its way	.176	.108	.157	.250	.318	.297	.426	.329	.244	.042	.162	1.00						4.24	0.84
30	I have been eating more comfort food since my redundancy	.091	.120	.109	-.164	-.163	-.052	-.063	-.145	-.081	.215	.242	.009	1.00					3.33	1.29
31	Outplacement provided me with a structure to help me with my transition	.216	.086	.277	.413	.440	.401	.430	.253	.400	-.133	.038	.215	-.083	1.00				4.1	1.04
32	I am grateful for another chance to do something different	.282	.079	.249	.371	.503	.586	.622	.373	.510	.081	.246	.346	-.078	.444	1.00			4.07	0.96
33	My personal well-being has improved and I am confident it will stay high in my new job	.205	.010	.154	.259	.393	.500	.538	.312	.558	.055	.190	.325	.074	.285	.623	1.00		3.83	0.99
34	It has taken me some time to recover my self-esteem	.327	.251	.292	-.182	-.131	.155	.137	-.103	.108	.366	.482	.097	.428	.045	.164	.282	1.00	3.02	1.45

Study 3 – Appendix B

Table 6

Component Loadings from the Rotated Component Structure Matrix for Re-employability Esteem Items. Principal Component Analysis with Oblimin Rotation

Items	Components			
	1	2	3	4
1 Response Scale:				
It has taken me some time to recover my self-esteem	.823		-.382	
I have felt down more often than up since my role became redundant	.777			
My view of self plummeted completely	.700		-.400	
I often feel/think that I, as a person and not just my role, have become redundant	.663			
I couldn't deal with another major setback like this in my life	.639			
My closest relationships have been strained during this time	.638			
Our financial situation has been a source of anxiety for me	.604			
I have been eating more comfort food since my redundancy	.526			
I feel fearful that my next role will be made redundant	.517			
I felt the redundancy was the beginning of a positive new chapter	.513		-.461	
I am a resilient person who handles difficulties well	.502			
Initially, loss of control was what I found most difficult to deal with	.488			
I see myself as valuable no matter what I do	.484	-.432		.471
My family has been a source of anxiety	.454			
My financial situation has not been a source of stress	.446			
Spending hours on job applications doesn't help me feel more optimistic	.422		-.367	
I will do all in my power to endeavour that I never lose my job again	.384			
Since my redundancy, I have been drinking more alcohol	.348			
I am typically a 'glass half empty' type of person	.332			
I have often felt under pressure from my partner to get a job	.331			
Outplacement would be better if there was more job negotiation available	.320			
My family has been a source of support and encouragement				
Work has never been the most important thing in my life				
2 Reappraisal Scale:				
It has been beneficial to have had the time and opportunity to think about who I am and what is impo...		-.795		
I have benefited from the support of others who are going through the same transition		-.776		
I am grateful for another chance to do something different		-.753		

Items	Components			
	1	2	3	4
It has been very helpful to speak with other people who have experienced a redundancy		-.697		
I am grateful for this experience		-.684		
Outplacement provided me with a structure to help me with my transition		-.642		
My personal well-being has improved and I am confident it will stay high in my new job	.365	-.633		.416
I feel more comfortable with uncertainty than before my redundancy		-.604		.304
Since experiencing role redundancy, I have reappraised how important work is to me		-.582		
Outplacement support has been useful/helpful to me during my transition		-.568		
I have a clearer vision of where my life is going than I did prior to my redundancy		-.542		.323
My future career/life will be different as a result of this experience		-.538		.382
Sometimes you need to be patient and trust that something good is on its way		-.504		
I have found it important to talk to people outside of my close network about my transition		-.451		
The biggest learning for me from this experience is that I need to have a good professional network		-.364		
I am lucky that I always land on my feet		-.320		
I was feeling burnout prior to the redundancy		.316		
Regular exercise has helped me deal better with this situation		-.309		
3 Separation Scale:				
I feel like I was shafted			-.835	
I feel that the decision to make my role redundant was unfair			-.810	
I feel there was mutual respect communicated during the redundancy notification process			-.766	
I believe that my organisation was telling me the truth about my redundancy			-.753	
The redundancy notice/process was handled fairly			-.662	
Internal politics did not play a part in my redundancy			-.643	
The redundancy package was too good to give up	.313	-.501		
I have mostly loved my job/s				.581
I was surprised by my initial reaction to the news that I was to be made redundant				-.564
I have never had to look for jobs before because I have mostly been approached about new jobs				.520
I knew my role would be made redundant			-.393	-.514
My closest relationships have become even stronger during this time				.404
It has never been difficult for me to find a job/s				

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization. Items in bold were kept in the corresponding scale. Only items with loading over .3 were conserved.

Study 3 – Appendix C

Table 7

Component Loadings from the Rotated Component Pattern Matrix for Re-employability

Esteem Items. Principal Component Analysis with Oblimin Rotation

Items	Components			
	1	2	3	4
1 Response Scale:				
It has taken me some time to recover my self-esteem	.788			
I have felt down more often than up since my role became redundant	.759			
My closest relationships have been strained during this time	.659			
My view of self plummeted completely	.655			
I couldn't deal with another major setback like this in my life	.654			
I often feel/think that I, as a person and not just my role, have become redundant	.641			
Our financial situation has been a source of anxiety for me	.568			
I have been eating more comfort food since my redundancy	.539			
I feel fearful that my next role will be made redundant	.516			
I am a resilient person who handles difficulties well	.492			
Initially, loss of control was what I found most difficult to deal with	.488			
My family has been a source of anxiety	.465			
I see myself as valuable no matter what I do	.440	-.357		.382
I felt the redundancy was the beginning of a positive new chapter	.436		-.335	
My financial situation has not been a source of stress	.410			
I have often felt under pressure from my partner to get a job	.407		.352	
I will do all in my power to endeavour that I never lose my job again	.386			
Spending hours on job applications doesn't help me feel more optimistic	.373			
Since my redundancy, I have been drinking more alcohol	.341			
I am typically a 'glass half empty' type of person	.321			
Outplacement would be better if there was more job negotiation available				
My family has been a source of support and encouragement				
Work has never been the most important thing in my life				
2 Reappraisal Scale:				
I have benefited from the support of others who are going through the same transition		-.809		
It has been beneficial to have had the time and opportunity to think about who I am and what is impo...		-.756		
It has been very helpful to speak with other people who have experienced a redundancy		-.738		

Items	Components			
	1	2	3	4
I am grateful for another chance to do something different I am grateful for this experience Outplacement provided me with a structure to help me with my transition Outplacement support has been useful/helpful to me during my transition Since experiencing role redundancy, I have reappraised how important work is to me My personal well-being has improved and I am confident it will stay high in my new job I feel more comfortable with uncertainty than before my redundancy I have found it important to talk to people outside of my close network about my transition I have a clearer vision of where my life is going than I did prior to my redundancy Sometimes you need to be patient and trust that something good is on its way My future career/life will be different as a result of this experience I was feeling burnout prior to the redundancy The biggest learning for me from this experience is that I need to have a good professional network Regular exercise has helped me deal better with this situation I feel sorry for some of the people I meet who I know will find it hard to secure a new job I am lucky that I always land on my feet	.315	-.718 -.669 -.645 -.594 -.574 -.572 -.542 -.498 -.495 -.492 -.492 .357 -.320 -.304		-.300 .320
3 Separation Scale: I feel like I was shafted I feel that the decision to make my role redundant was unfair I feel there was mutual respect communicated during the redundancy notification process I believe that my organisation was telling me the truth about my redundancy The redundancy notice/process was handled fairly Internal politics did not play a part in my redundancy The redundancy package was too good to give up I was surprised by my initial reaction to the news that I was to be made redundant I have mostly loved my job/s I knew my role would be made redundant I have never had to look for jobs before because I have mostly been approached about new jobs My closest relationships have become even stronger during this time It has never been difficult for me to find a job/s	.327		-.794 -.784 -.762 -.728 -.672 -.644 -.434	-.593 .581 -.537 .533 .335

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization. Items in bold were kept in the corresponding scale. Only items with loading over .4 were conserved.

General Conclusion

Using a mixed methods approach, the present research has highlighted a number of features that contribute positively to the way in which different individuals' progress from retrenchment through the various stages of career transition towards their future role or career. The value of the research methodology is that the limitations of one method are complemented by the strengths of other methods in the work as a whole. Consistent with previous research, we found that resilient individuals cope better with retrenchment and the job-search that ensues. The results suggest that resilient people tend to respond adaptively to the retrenchment event, and maintain a level of well-being that permits them to actively and assertively participate in the search for their next career opportunity. In particular, the findings point to the role of general well-being as a key driver of job-search assertiveness, itself a predictor of re-employment. The importance of general well-being as a core component of a successful career transition calls for career consultants to be mindful of the general well-being of their clients in their efforts to support a successful career transition.

Perhaps one of the most valuable contributions of this research was the development of a Career Transition Model which not only answered one of the outplacement participant's request for a "roadmap of the career transition process" but informed the third quantitative study. The qualitative findings established a 3-stage transition model inspired by Van Gennep (1908) to describe the successive stages that retrenched individuals are likely to go through, as they emerge from a professional context to explore their options and choose their next pursuit. The three phases of the Career Transition Model (separation, transition, reincorporation) provide a framework to make sense of the range of thoughts, emotions and behaviours that individuals may experience. *Separation* crucially addresses the perceived fairness of the retrenchment process, and *Response* captures the emotional impact of retrenchment, while Re-

appraisal addresses a key feature which contributes to whether the process is merely the search for another job, or permits a broader re-framing of life-options, conceptions of self and conceptions of work. It provides a detailed guide to consultants and support for persons as to how they might help scaffold the retrenchee's transition from one phase to the next, until new opportunities have been identified and successfully pursued. The model also outlines the contextual features and concurrent stressors that individuals may encounter throughout their transition, which is useful for outplacement and Human Resources professionals providing support. It provides career consultants with a practical roadmap to support their clients as they progress through the phases of this challenging transition.

The model makes a research contribution by permitting people to consolidate disparate findings into a model which might be tested using path analysis or other statistical analyses. To further test the model, future research might explore whether experiential discoveries remain once the individual recommences work and with different cohorts. The *Separation* and *Response* components of the model confirm previous research but the role and impact of the *Reappraisal* component has been subjected to less research and requires longitudinal research to evaluate its longer term impact.

The research has also introduced to the domain of organisational psychology and to career transition in particular, the relevance of psychological mindedness, a construct well known in clinical settings. The findings showed that psychologically minded individuals, that is, individuals who are able to self-reflect, explore and discuss their own feelings and thoughts, tend to fare better through their career transition. Psychological mindedness was highly associated with individuals' response to, and reappraisal of, their redundancy as well as with resilience and general self-efficacy. This is perhaps not surprising given that these individuals are able to engage in self-

revelatory conversations with others and thus receive focused support permitting them to gain clarity on their own values, motives and aspirations. In addition, psychologically minded individuals showed a greater ability to reappraise their situation, reflect on their experience in a balanced manner, and project themselves into a positive future from a career perspective. We have highlighted ways in which career consultants might scaffold the experience of job loss for individuals who are less psychologically minded, including tailoring coaching sessions to focus on goals and directives within a non-ambiguous context.

McKee-Ryan et al. (2005) suggest that the importance and centrality of work to individuals may stem from Protestant-work-ethic socialization or simply from a belief that work is central to one's life and satisfaction (Kanungo, 1982). Because individuals with high work-role centrality find the work role as providing meaning and fulfilment, the absence of work for these individuals has been proposed by many authors to lead to lower psychological and physical well-being (e.g., Ashforth, 2001; P. R. Jackson, Stafford, Banks, & Warr, 1983; Kinicki, 1989) (p.56). Our research confirmed this but also suggested that individuals with a more contemporary view of work, that is, a jobs-for-now perspective, would be better placed to re-incorporate into the current employment landscape. The Conception of Work scale that we developed reflects different views of work that not only measure the meaning and importance of work to individuals, but more specifically, consider the degree to which their perspective of work is appropriate in light of the emerging 'new deal' psychological contract (Hendry & Jenkins, 1997).

A 'gold watch' perspective of work was significantly associated with the capacity for reappraisal, which is fortunate as these individuals are most in need of updating their conception of work to meet the changed employment context that they are confronting. Psychological mindedness moderated the influence of Conception of

Work on Re-employability Esteem. Therefore, an individual's capacity to reflect on, and discuss their feelings and thoughts enables them to question and challenge those aspects of their conception of work that are not conducive to re-employability esteem. This suggests that an important element of outplacement support may perhaps involve optimising outcomes by focusing on improving individuals' re-employability esteem through their conception of work and psychological mindedness. Further research is needed to explore whether the manner by which one comes to have a jobs-for-now conception of work. For example, if it is the result of disillusionment, it may conceivably negatively impact resilience, well-being and re-employability esteem which may not bode well for their subsequent attempts to re-enter the workforce.

High re-employability esteem was associated, in the present research, with optimistic self-beliefs about personal capacity to cope with a range of difficult life circumstances (general self-efficacy), resilience and psychological mindedness. Specifically, the findings indicated that those scoring most highly on employability esteem were those who evaluated their separation experience as fair, that they experienced a better emotional response to their separation and were better placed to tackle the important questions they needed to find answers to questions such as "Who am I?", and "What do I want to do?" Re-employability esteem was distinct from, but related to, general self-efficacy, resilience, psychological mindedness and Conception of Work. Consequently, at any given point in time, the Re-employability esteem scale could provide useful information about how individuals are viewing and responding to their career transition. Providing Re-employability esteem feedback at different points through a career transition potentially opens opportunities for individuals, their career consultants and others, to discuss their progress in more focused and meaningful ways. However, ultimately, to assess the benefits of the construct, future research is required to confirm the association between re-employability esteem and reemployment quality.

This research confirmed previous outcomes concerning the importance of resilience for individuals affected by job loss (Moorhouse & Caltabiano, 2004), established the importance of psychological mindedness and conception of work for a positive response to redundancy, suggested a new career transition model, and proposed a re-employability esteem scale to evaluate individuals' potential for a positive career transition. To strengthen these findings and further contribute to the field of career transition, longitudinal studies are required to measure how conception of work evolves over time, how psychological mindedness affects the suitability and quality of re-employment, and how individuals sustain the gains in self-at-work awareness acquired through the initial career transition process. Additional research with larger study samples and a broader range of socio-economic backgrounds may potentially add to, or challenge, our findings and strengthen the evidence supporting career transition support practices.

The population studied here was mostly managerial and professional. This group is understudied, most likely in view of the fact that since they tend to be financially secure and well-educated, they are generally not in need of government help while unemployed (Zikic & Klehe, 2006). However, this population (along with entrepreneurs) are also responsible for the employment (and well-being at work) of thousands of people, directly and indirectly. In our view, it is essential from a broad social impact perspective to further research how managers and professionals transition most effectively and find themselves in positions that they are well suited for. When these executives and professionals are under-employed, possibly as a result of poorly managed career transition, their potential positive social impact is severely limited, resulting in potentially far greater societal costs.

While redundancy might be seen as a negative life event, and be experienced as a shock and a challenge at first, we found that for some, it was also experienced as an

opportunity. In the words of H.W. Longfellow (1882), “Defeat may be victory in disguise; the lowest ebb is the turn of the tide.” For many, redundancy signals entry into a world of uncertainty, self-doubt, and the perspective of difficult times ahead. For others however, similar circumstances open new perspectives, provide opportunities to reassess one’s view of work, and create a world of possibilities not envisaged before. How does “the lowest ebb” transform into “the turn of the tide” for individuals confronted with redundancy? This research provides new insights into how people faced with redundancy can respond and emerge from this modern battle with greater clarity and a stronger sense of alignment in their work life.

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