

Intelligent careers: Being protean and resilient in a changing world

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Call for papers

Intelligent careers: Being protean and resilient in a changing world

In the current context, careers are increasingly complex and uncertain. Economic and financial crises, political decisions that affect trade between and resource allocation among industries, immigration patterns, and changing social norms over what is expected from working men and women, professions and enterprises, all impact the landscape on which careers take place. In this scenario, the factors that help individuals to recover quickly from high-impact disruptions, and even thrive in such conditions, remains uncertain. An intelligent career – involving both the way we take stock of and pursue further action in our careers – offers a way forward.

Intelligent careers involve individuals taking ownership of their working lives, and applying their intelligence to their careers (Arthur, Khapova and Richardson, 2017). They are characterized by opportunity-taking, persistent adaptation, being true to oneself, staying in control, building communities, developing identities, reflecting on subjectively important outcomes, managing career downfalls, and developing reputation. Intelligent careers include three ways of knowing: knowing why, knowing whom and knowing how (Arthur, Claman and DeFillippi, 1995). For example, under a severe disruption, a resilient individual may display: acceptance of becoming a “different” person (knowing why), support from family, friends and/or other close people (knowing whom), and energy to develop a wider repertoire of skills (knowing how) (Bentim, 2005; Minello, 2010).

This sub-theme addresses the interplay between diverse contextual situations, and individual, group and organizational responses in terms of intelligent career management. Building bridges across the macro and micro perspectives on the world for work (including taken-for-granted and changing norms, practices and arrangements) can help explain resilience in careers, its impact on career-related variables (e.g. role identity, transition and change, trajectories and stages of careers) as well as the enactment of these variables in the wider environment.

We invite papers that address pertinent questions in terms of how individuals and groups are resilient in their careers. We are particularly interested in three questions:

- How individuals face the challenges and opportunities imposed by social norms and changes, with intelligent career strategies – see for example Suzanne (2015).
- How individuals display a variety of career strategies to cope with the economic, social, and financial conditions of diverse countries and regions (e.g. Waters et al., 2014).
- How individuals, groups and organizations’ actions affect the landscape of careers for current and future generations —see for example Briscoe, Hall and Mayrhofer (2012).

The above emphases should not be seen as exhaustive, but suggestive. In general, we welcome papers that advance our theoretical and empirical knowledge of careers, alongside those that

analyze the wider reciprocal implications for the organizations, industries, occupations and society through which the changing world evolves. Papers can have a theoretical, methodological or empirical focus or combine them. Through the presentations and discussions held in the group, we expect to encourage reflection and research avenues in relation to how individuals – and through them groups, organizations and industries – can be adaptive and resilient in their careers, while recognizing the tensions that exist in this process.

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Michael B. Arthur is Professor of Management at Suffolk University, and has been a proponent of intelligent career thinking for over 20 years. His co-authored and co-edited books include the Handbook of Career Theory (1989), The Boundaryless Career (1996), The New Careers (1999), Knowledge at Work (2006) and An Intelligent Career (2017). He was the 2006 recipient of the Academy of Management's Everett Hughes Award for lifetime achievement in career studies.

Jon Briscoe is Professor of Management at Northern Illinois University. His main research interests center around self-directed (or protean) careers and how values play a key role in career self-management. He is co founder and serves on the steering committee of the 5C Group (Cross-Cultural Collaboration on Contemporary Careers) which focused upon comparative careers research across the world, including various countries in Latin America.

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