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THESIS PROJECT

That does not make any sense...

Unemployment and the relationship to work in
Switzerland

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"He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how"

Friedrich Nietzsche

Abstract

In contemporary western societies, work is an essential part of many people's lives (Blustein, 2006). Research on meaningful work is currently flourishing (Akkermans & Kubasch, 2017) but little is known about how a career shock (Akkermans et al., 2018) affects it. The main goal of our project is to expand the understanding of these phenomena by studying what characterizes the relationship to work (RTW) of people following a job loss in Switzerland.

To reach our goal, we will focus on three research goals. The first one is to validate the Relationship to Work Questionnaire in the Swiss context (RTWQ-CH). Our second objective is to measure the RTW of unemployed people to verify if sex, age, nationality, professional sector, unemployment duration, or the fact that unemployment is lived as a career shock predict the RTW. The third research objective is to understand the eventual impacts of unemployment on the RTW.

To reach these goals, we will adopt a mixed-methods sequential design. We will first carry out a CFA to validate the RTWQ-CH. Then, quantitative data will be collected amongst unemployed workers and qualitative data will be collected through of semi-structured interviews among a subsample of them. In the last phase, quantitative and qualitative data will be integrated to allow us to address our main goal in a comprehensive manner.

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1. Introduction

What makes someone's work meaningful? How can organizations provide jobs or careers that are meaningful to their employees? In contemporary western societies, work is an essential part of most people's lives (Blustein, 2006; Juntunen, 2006; Mercure & Vultur, 2010). Thus, employees often have high expectations towards work and want it to fulfill certain psychological, social, and economic needs (Blustein, 2006; Mercure & Vultur, 2010). Meaningful work has been shown to influence work engagement (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004), job satisfaction (Steger, Dik, & Duffy, 2012), work motivation (Hackman, 1980; Roberson, 1990), and missing fewer days of work (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). It has also been shown to influence career outcomes such as organizational identification (Pratt, Rockman, & Kaufman, 2006), career development (Duffy & Dik, 2013), empowerment (Spreitzer, 1996), and performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Wrzesniewski, 2003). Meaningful work can also impact personal outcomes such as self-fulfillment (Kahn, 2007) and lower levels of stress (Elangovan, Pinder, & McLean, 2010; Treadgold, 1999). Furthermore, people generally expect more from work than a simple paycheck (Steger et al., 2012). Recognizing this trend, organizations begin to understand the value of fostering meaningful work, enabling them to better attract and retain their employees (Deloitte, 2017). That can explain why research on meaningful work is currently flourishing, notably in work and organizational psychology, as well as management (Akkermans & Kubasch, 2017). To address these issues from a vocational psychology perspective, our project will focus on the notion of relationship to work (RTW), which is a multidimensional construct composed of the multiple meanings that one can give to one's work (Fournier, Lachance, Lahrizi, Masdonati, & Viviers, in press).

Another current trend within the career domain is the change of the configuration of worker's career paths (D'Amours, 2002; Kalleberg, 2009; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009) that has compelled scholars to find new ways and

concepts to describe current careers more adequately (Fournier et al., in press). One of these concepts is the *boundaryless career*, which describes careers in which employees are no longer attached to one single employer and are, thus, more independent in the construction of their paths (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005). Another recent concept, the *protean career*, defines a career path that is self-determined and driven by personal values to serve one's life purpose (Hall, 2004). These two concepts describe careers in which individuals have relative agency over their paths. Many workers, however, do not have the opportunity to manage their careers in a proactive way and experience uncertain career paths. In these cases, sociologists speak about *precariat* (Paugam, 2002), which defines the condition of people who feel that they live in constant job insecurity, have a great difficulty to get hired, and, more generally, suffer from a lack of control over their career (Di Fabio, Palazzeschi, & Bucci, 2017).

Moreover, contemporary career paths are becoming more nonlinear, individualized, unpredictable, and marked by an increasing number of career changes (Guilbert, Bernaud, Gouvernet, & Rossier, 2016; Guillaume, 2009; Vulture & Bernier, 2013). This means that workers will have to face and manage transition periods at some point, which can be more or less expected (Fouad & Bynner, 2008).

According to Akkermans and colleagues (2018), one of the aspects that current models and career theories lack is a description of the impact of unforeseen and unpredictable events on one's career trajectory and how individuals experience and cope with these events. The authors name these events *career shocks*, which cover very different types of events, going from receiving a promotion, the passing of a relative, getting sick, pregnant, injured, fired etc. The research topic of this thesis will be unemployment periods, which can be conceived as a specific form of career shock.

This thesis will focus on the evolution of relationship to work following the career shock of unemployment in Switzerland. To the author's knowledge,

the two themes of relationship to work and career shocks have not yet been studied together. They are relevant to better understand current career paths and how to deal with career shocks, which are an important aspect of many career experiences (Akkermans et al., 2018).

In the following sections, the research topic will first be explained and will focus on the issue of unemployment within the swiss labor market. Then the concept of relationship to work will be exposed, as well as the different scales that exist to measure it. Then the concept of career shock will further be defined and complete the framework of our project. The research questions, as well as the methodology that will be utilized to answer them, will be explained. Lastly, a plan of the thesis will be presented.

2. Research topic

To understand the context of this thesis, the swiss labor market will be described. The unemployment in Switzerland will then be defined and statistics about it will be explained. Then, studies that show what psychosocial variables, including relationship to work, are influenced by unemployment will be presented. Finally, studies about the links between unemployment and the meaning of work will be presented.

2.1 Swiss labor market

The swiss labor market is mainly composed of small to medium organizations, with a tradition of social partnerships. It can be qualified as "rather liberal" (Masdonati, Schreiber, Marcionetti, & Rossier, 2019). Thanks to a well-performing educational system, in which swiss students obtain higher scores than the OECD average on the PISA tests (OECD, 2019), as well as a well-functioning vocational education system, the majority of the workforce is relatively highly qualified (Eichhorst, Rodríguez-Planas, Schmidl, & Zimmerman, 2015). That means that most workers occupy a leadership position, or have an intellectual, scientific, or intermediary job (Nathani, Hellmüller, Rieser, Hoff, & Nesarajah, 2017). Regarding the nature of work, in 2015, 72% of workers were employed in the service sector.

Regarding relevant economic trends in Switzerland, according to the Federal Statistical Office (OFS, 2018), swiss economy has been growing at a steady but regular pace since 2014. The unemployment rate according to the International Labor Office (ILO) has decreased of 0.2% during the same period, whereas the official unemployment rate (people who are officially registered as unemployed) stayed stable. Also, the OFS (2018) observed that the quantity of vacant jobs increased of 20% in the last 5 years, which means that job opportunities do exist for unemployed people but that companies have more difficulties than in the past to find the "right" workers.

Nonetheless, since 2014, it can be interesting to note that the gap between men's and women's unemployment rate (UR), according to the ILO definition, has grown from 0.4% (4.5% for men, and 4.9% for women) to 0.6% (4.3% for men, and 4.9% for women). It can also be important to note that, according to the OECD Employment Protection Legislation Index, Switzerland obtain low scores in almost all the components, especially in the protection of permanent workers against dismissal index, for which swiss scores are amongst the lowest of the OECD (Antonini, 2018).

2.2 Swiss unemployment

Two offices produce statistics on unemployment in Switzerland. The State Secretariat of Economy (SECO) statistics assess the percentage of the population who has subscribed to a Regional Placement Office (ORP). Their statistics don't consider unemployed people who don't subscribe to an ORP and, thus, tend to underestimate unemployment rates. The other office that produce statistics is the Federal Statistical Office (OFS), who adopts the ILO definition of unemployment. According to the ILO, an unemployed person is an active person in search for a job and who is available in the short term to begin a professional activity (OFS, 2017). OFS statistics are based on a representative 105'000 people survey (OFS, 2010). They are, thus, more precise in their conception of unemployment but have less statistical accuracy than the ones by SECO.

SECO's statistics (2019) and OFS statistics (2019) about unemployment are reported in Table 1. They converge on the fact that foreign workers and younger workers run a greater risk of being unemployed. Nonetheless, their conclusions differ regarding sex, age, and professional sector, probably due to their different inclusion criteria. For the SECO, women have a lower UR than men, whereas, according to the OFS, men have a lower UR. Regarding age, the SECO indicates that 24-49 year olds have a slightly higher UR than the other age categories, whereas, according to the OFS, 15-24 year olds have a significantly higher UR than the others. And regarding the

professional sector, the SECO indicates that the secondary sector has the higher UR, whereas it is the tertiary sector for the OFS. In any case, both the SECO and OFS statistics seem to indicate the importance of considering inter-group differences when studying unemployment. They show that the probability and duration of unemployment varies according to sex, age, nationality, and professional domain. For that reason, our project will use these variables as a mean of comparison.

2.3 Psychosocial impacts of unemployment

The literature on the psychosocial effects of unemployment has shown that unemployed people are more distressed than workers (Kokko, Pulkkinen, & Puustinen, 2000). Unemployment has been shown to negatively impact physical health (Griep et al, 2015), mental health (Wanberg, 2012), as well as suicidal behavior (Milner, Page, & LaMontagne, 2014). Authors agree on the fact that this distress is not only the result of financial difficulties (Shöb, 2012). For example, based on social identity theory (Hornsey, 2008), Hetschko, Knab, and Schob (2013), highlight the process of devaluation of one's identity when one does not comply to the norms and expectations of one's social group, which can be the case for unemployed people. Horn and Maseland (2013) confirm these results by showing that the effects of unemployment on subjective well-being are stronger in Protestant countries, where work is a central aspect of human life.

In the literature, there has been two recent international meta-analyses on the relation between unemployment and mental health. In the most recent one, Paul and Moser (2009) have shown that unemployment has a negative influence on distress, depression, anxiety, psychosomatic symptoms, subjective well-being, and self-esteem. Their results indicated that the most distressed unemployed groups are men, blue-collar workers, middle aged, from a minority group, single, and long-term unemployed. That confirms

Table 1
Unemployment statistics in Switzerland according to the SECO and the FOS

	Statistics	
	SECO	OFS
Global unemployment rate	2.8	4.6
Sex		
Men	3.0	4.1
Women	2.5	5.1
Nationality		
Swiss	1.9	3.5
Foreigner	5.3	7.5
Age		
15-24 year olds	2.4	7.3
25-49 year olds	2.9	4.6
50+ year olds	2.6	3.9
Professional sector		
Sector I	1.2	2.2
Sector II	4.0	3.7
Sector III	2.8	4.0
Mean unemployment duration	180 days	249 days

that the experience of unemployment differs according to social groups. McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, and Kinicki (2005) also came to the conclusion that unemployment tends to have a negative impact on mental health. However, they found that work-role centrality and coping resources can moderate it, which means that a person for whom work is central in life and that has inefficient coping strategies will suffer more when unemployed. The authors argue that more research is needed to better understand the relation between work-role centrality and well-being during unemployment, which we will focus on in our project. In France, Sapinho and colleagues (2008) have also shown that unemployed people have higher chances to

experience a depressive episode. Furthermore, Beck and colleagues (2007, 2012) showed that French unemployed consume more psychotropics than the employed and that this consumption is increased among the long term unemployed compared to the short-term unemployed.

2.4 Unemployment and meaning of work

To our knowledge, research on the relationship between unemployment and the meaning of work is scarce. Amongst the few existing studies, Isaksson, Johansson, Bellaagh, and Sjöberg (2004) showed that what they called “work values” (which includes the concepts of work centrality, work involvement, and agreement with societal norm) are not affected by unemployment. In their study, it tends to remain stable and even to get higher among long-term unemployed. They also found no work values differences between men and women and that unemployment had negative effects only on men. Another study from Saunders, Nedelec, and McEachen (2018) confirmed the stability of work centrality, as well as valued work outcomes and goals among unemployed with chronic work disability, the duration of unemployment having no influence on these variables. Also, results of Bendassoli and colleagues (2016) suggest that there may not be any difference in the meaning that unemployed give to their work in comparison with the employed.

Recent research has also focused on the relationship between *underemployment* and the meaning of work. According to Feldman (1996) there are 5 types of underemployment: being overqualified; being employed outside of one’s field; having more skills and experience than required; and having a temporary, intermittent, or part-time work, which is relevant for our project because it can be considered as partial unemployment. In the most recent study, Kim and Allan (2019) showed that the relationship between underemployment and meaningful work is moderated by autonomy and competence. Underemployment was negatively related to autonomy and positively related to competence, which

were both positively related to meaningful work. That indicates a complex relationship between underemployment and the meaning of work. In a second study, Allan, Rolniak, and Bouchard (2018) examine whether the relationship between underemployment and well-being is moderated by the meaning of work. Their results suggest that having a meaningful work when being underemployed is associated with negative affects such as stress and depression. They also showed that underemployed people with a meaningless work tend to feel more positive affects. These results suggest that underemployment tends to be more psychologically challenging for people who have a meaningful work.

3. Conceptual framework

This chapter focuses on the main concepts and notions that will be used in our project. First, the concept of relationship to work will be explained. To do that, the various notions of meaning of work (MOW) will be distinguished, as well as the different assessment tools to measure it, including the relationship to work questionnaire. Then, a synthesis of the MOW literature will be done and research on MOW stability will be explained. Finally, the second main concept of our project, the notion of career shock, will be described.

3.1 Relationship to work

The notion of “relationship to work” that will be used in our project is the one conceptualized by Fournier and colleagues (in press). It is a multidimensional construct that was elaborated to “take into account the new realities of work and people’s contexts” (Fournier et al., in press, p.7) and, in doing so, to better understand the various pathways that people can take to give meaning to their work. Thus, it is important first to understand the notion of MOW and how it was conceptualized by various scholars. Then, the concept of relationship to work and its multiple dimensions will be explained.

3.1.1 From meaning of work to relationship to work

What does MOW mean? Answering this question, although it can seem easy at first, has proven to be a very challenging exercise for scholars over the years (Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010). According to Rosso and colleagues (p.94), meaning is “the output of having made sense of something, or what it signifies; as in an individual interpreting what her work means, or the role her work plays, in the context of her life”. The literature on the MOW in the field of organizational behavior presumes that people derive meaning from their work based on their individual

interpretation of work experiences (Baumeister, 1991; Wrzesniewski, 2003). The manner in which people ascribe meaning to their work can be extremely complex and can, for example, be influenced by multiple factors, such as general beliefs, values, attitudes about work (Nord, Brief, Atieh, & Doherty, 1990; Roberson, 1990; Ros, Schwartz, & Surkiss, 1999), or even the socially and culturally held worldviews and value system (Geertz, 1973; Kluckhohn, 1951).

It might be useful to describe and differentiate the most important constructs of the MOW literature, since they often appear and can be misleading. The terms meaning of *work*, meaning of *working*, meaning *in* work, meaningful work, meaningfulness, work ethos, and relationship to work can sometimes be used interchangeably and might create confusion. The similarities and differences between these concepts are summarized in Table 2.

Current literature (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Rosso et al., 2010; Dik, Byrne, & Steger, 2013; Lysova et al., 2018) suggest that when scholars talk about the meaning of work, they are referring to the *type* of meaning that people derive from their work, whereas when they use the terms meaningful work, work meaningfulness, or meaning in work, they are referring to the *amount* of meaning that is attributed to work. In other words, the *meaning of work* could respond to the question “what’s the purpose of one’s work?”, whereas *meaningfulness* could respond to the question “how meaningful does one feel one’s work is?”.

Theoretical models about the factors affecting *meaningful work* have come from various disciplines such as management, organizational behavior, and vocational psychology (Lysova, Allan, Dik, Duffy, & Steger, 2018). One of these models was elaborated by Morin (2008) who decomposed the concept into three dimensions: a) the meaning of work (*sensus*); b) work orientation (*sumo*) and c) *phenomenology*. The author created a scale based on that model.

Arnoux-Nicolas, Sovet, Lhotellier, Di Fabio, & Bernaud (2016) conceptualized the meaning of work as being composed of three dimensions: a) the *importance of work*, b) the *direction*, and c) the *purposes of work*. Based on that model they created a scale called the *Meaning of Work Inventory* (MWI).

Another model was created by Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009). According to them, a tension exists between two dimensions: the need to satisfy the *self* and the need to satisfy *others*; the need of *being* and the need of *doing*. By crossing these two dimensions, they pointed out four sources of meaningful work: a) developing and becoming self (being-self), b) unity with others (being-others) c) serving others (doing-others) d) expressing one's full potential (doing-self). Lips-Wiersma and Wright (2012) used this model to create a scale that they called the *Comprehensive Meaningful Work Scale* (CMWS).

In a similar way, Rosso and colleagues (2010) have identified two dimensions among which meaningful work can be derived. The dimensions indicate in which direction the action is intended. The first dimension differentiates actions that are directed towards the *self* or towards *others*; the second one differentiates actions that are directed towards *agency* (creation, division of elements, assertion...) or towards *communion* (connection, union of elements). This model highlights four pathways to experience meaningful work: *unification* (other-communion), *self-connection* (self-communion), *individuation* (self-agency), and *contribution* (other-agency).

In their model, Steger and colleagues (2012) identified three dimensions for a work to be experienced as meaningful: a) greater good motivation, b) psychological meaningfulness in work, and c) meaning-making through work. Based on that model, the authors created one of the most recent and

well-known scale about meaningful work: The *Work and Meaning Inventory* (WAMI).

The notion of *meaning of working* was created by the MOW International Research Team (MOW IRT) in 1987. They defined it as “the meaning of working life for human beings in modern society?” (p.12, MOW IRT, 1987, cited in Fournier et al., in press). Their model is composed of 5 dimensions: a) centrality of working as a life role; b) societal norms about working; c) valued working outcomes; d) importance of work goals; and e) work-role identification. With that model, they created the most used up scale in MOW literature. The notion of *work ethos* is based on the MOW IRT model but is more recent and was conceptualized by Mercure & Vultur in 2010. They defined it as “the set of values, attitudes, and beliefs relating to work that engender a way of living one's work in everyday life.” (p.5, Mercure & Vultur, 2010, cited in Fournier et al, in press). These authors developed a multidimensional model composed of three main dimensions that are inspired by the MOW IRT (1987): a) the *absolute and relative centrality of work*; b) the *purpose of work*; and c) the *attitudes towards the main managerial standards*.

Although they are comprehensive models, these two last models suffer from two flaws. The MOW IRT model was elaborated in 1987 and the work and living conditions have deeply changed since. And the Mercure and Vultur model, although it is a recent one, is less comprehensive and does not have any scale based on it. These are two reasons that pushed Fournier and colleagues (in press) to develop and validate the *Relationship to Work Questionnaire* (RTWQ), which will now be explained.

3.1.2 Relationship to work

Fournier and colleagues (p.2, in press) have reviewed the literature and the scales on the MOW and have come up with a multidimensional construct, *relationship to work*, “in which each dimension reflects a particular facet of

a person's connection and attachment to work in general and to his or her working life". Their questionnaire is composed of 7 dimensions:

1. The *absolute centrality of work*, which is the importance that a person attaches to her work, independently of her other life domains. This concept is similar to the work meaningfulness concept of Rosso and colleagues (2010). It was conceptualized in two subdimensions: the *ideological value of work*, which refers to the belief of the individual that work is valuable in human life; and the *existential value of work*, which refers to the belief that one's work is valuable in one's personal life.

2. The *relative centrality of work and work valence*, which refers to the significance of work relative to other life roles as well as how much a person identifies herself with her work in comparison with her other roles. Work valence is similar to the concept of work meaning by Rosso and colleagues and can be positive, negative, or neutral.

3. The *purposes of work*, which has to do with the life goals that people seek to achieve at work, as well as the values that they seek to actualize at work. These purposes can be more directed towards personal and social development or, to the opposite, towards personal utility. These two types of purposes are similar to one of the two dimensions described by Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009), which opposes the need to satisfy others or the self.

4. The *general expectations regarding working life*. Fournier and colleagues define these dimensions as being "what is [...] a priority for people to find concrete examples of [...] in their working lives in general". These expectations are similar to the purposes and values of work but are more attached to the context itself and not the general goals of the activity.

5. The *obligations and duties of employers and society towards workers*. This concept is based on the MOW IRT "societal norms about working"

dimension as well as the “attitudes towards the main managerial standards” dimension of Mercure and Vultur’s model (2010).

6. The *obligations and duties of workers towards employers and society*, which is based on the same literature than the previous dimension.

7. The *representation of decent work*. The concept of decent work is derived from the Psychology of Working Theory (Duffy et al., 2016). Fournier and colleagues described decent work as work that “provides people with sufficiently good working conditions and income to ensure their well-being, in which their skills are recognized, and in which they are treated with justice, dignity, and with respect for their physical and psychological health”.

To our knowledge, the relationship to work is the most recent and comprehensive concept defining the different pathways that one can use to give meaning to one’s work.

3.1.3 Synthesis of the RTW components

The literature on the MOW is rich and diverse. A few different terms are being used (see Table 2) and these different concepts do not always measure the same facets. To gain some clarity, we collected all the subdimensions that were presented in this project and reorganized them to better understand what are the fundamental dimensions that were conceptualized and measured. They could be organized in six dimensions: absolute centrality of work, relative centrality of work, work finalities, work values, societal norms about work, and the representation of decent work.

The first dimension is the absolute centrality of work. It answers the question: how important does one feel one’s work is for oneself? The second dimension is the relative centrality of work. It answers the questions: how important is one’s work for oneself, compared to other life domains; and what role does work play in one’s life. The third dimension is the purpose

of work, which answers the question: what impact does one desire to have on society and on oneself through one's work. The fourth dimension is work values. It answers the question: which personal outcomes (e.g. prestige, status, accomplishment...) and aspects of work (e.g. working conditions, autonomy...) are desired. And the fifth dimension is societal norms about work, which answers the following question: what societal norms about work are meaningful to oneself. And the sixth dimension is the representation of decent work, which answers the question: how decent does one feel one's work is?

Table 2
Overviews of the different existing concepts of MOW and RTW.

Concept	Author(s)	Refers to...	Answers the following questions...	Scale(s) based on the concept
Meaning of work	Arnoux-Nicolas et al., 2016	The type of meaning of one's work	What's the purpose of one's work?	The Meaning of Work Inventory (Arnoux-Nicolas et al., 2016)
Meaningful work Work meaningfulness Meaning in work	Morin, 2008 Lips-Wiersma and Morris, 2009 Rosso et al., 2010 Steger et al., 2012	The amount of meaning in one's work	How meaningful does one feel one's work is?	Scale of Morin (2008) The Comprehensive Meaningful Work Scale (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012) The Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI) (Steger et al., 2012)
Meaning of working	MOW JRT, 1987	" The meaning of working life for human beings in modern society"	How important is one's work for oneself and society? Which work outcomes are meaningful to oneself? Which societal norms about work are meaningful to oneself?	The MOW JRT Questionnaire (1987)
Work ethos	Mercuré & Vultur, 2010	" The set of values, attitudes, and beliefs relating to work that engender a way of living one's work in everyday life."	How important is one's work for oneself? What's the purpose of one's work? Which managerial norms are meaningful to oneself?	No scale
Relationship to work	Fournier et al., in press	" The particular facets of a person's connection and attachment to work in general and to his or her working life"	How important is one's work for oneself? What's the purpose of one's work? What are one's general expectations regarding working life? What obligations and duties between workers and society are meaningful to oneself? Does one feel one has a decent job?	The Relationship to Work Questionnaire (Fournier et al., in press)

Table 3
Synthesis of the various dimensions of the MOW and RTW, grouped in six dimensions.

Dimension	Answers the question(s)	Literature subdimensions	Authors
Absolute centrality of work	How important does one feel one' s work is for oneself?	Absolute centrality of work Absolute centrality of work Importance of work goals Importance of work Meaning of work or <i>sensus</i>	Fournier et al., in press Mercure & Vultur, 2010 MOW IRT, 1987 Arnoux-Nicolasset al., 2016 Morin, 2008
Relative centrality of work	How important is one' s work for oneself, compared to other life domains? What role does work play in one' s life?	Relative centrality of work and work valence Relative centrality of work Centrality of working as a life role Work-role Identification	Fornunier et al., in press Mercure & Vultur, 2010 MOW IRT, 1987 MOW IRT, 1987
Purpose of work	What impact does one desire to have on society and on oneself through one' s work?	Purpose of work Purposes of work Understanding of work Meaningful work Meaningful work	Fournier et al., in press Arnoux-Nicolas, 2016 Arnoux-Nicoas, 2016 Lips-Wiersma et al., 2009 Rosso et al., 2010
Work values	Which personal outcomes and aspects of work are desired?	General expectations regarding working life Purpose of work Work orientation, or <i>sumo</i> Valued working outcomes Phenomenology Direction	Fournier et al., in press Mercure & Vultur, 2010 Morin, 2008 MOW IRT, 1987 Morin, 2008 Arnoux-Nicolas, 2016
Societal norms about work	What societal norms about work are meaningful to oneself?	Obligations and duties of employers and society to workers Obligations and duties of workers to employers and society Societal norms about working Attitude towards the main managerial standards	Fournier et al., in press Fournier et al., in press MOW IRT, 1987 Mercure & Vultur, 2010
Representation of decent work	How decent does one feel one' s work is?	Representation of decent work	Fournier et al., in press

Note. RTWQ subdimensions are indicated in bold.

3.1.4 RTW and sociodemographic variables

Since sex, nationality, age, and professional sector are sociodemographic variables that influence the probability and the duration of unemployment (see 2.2), it is relevant for our project to determine if these variables also predict the RTW.

Regarding sex, research on the link between gender and work centrality has produced mixed results (Kostek, 2012). For example, Cohrs et al. (2006) and Schmidt and Lee (2008) have found no sex differences in work centrality, whereas the MOW IRT (1987), Mannheim (1993), and Harpaz and Fu (1997) have found that men tend to be more work-centered than women. In a more recent study, Gallie (2019) conducted a literature review on work values and stressed significant differences between men and women concerning the relative centrality of work. She also showed that there is a great heterogeneity between women, mostly due the variations of work values between countries, cultures, and religions.

Regarding age, Parry and Urwin (2011) have conducted a literature review on generational differences in work values. They found that research results are mixed and lack consideration for gender, nationality, and ethnicity. In another study, Mercur, Vultur, and Fleury (2012) compared work values and attitudes of young workers and older workers. Results showed no significant differences but indicated that younger workers tend to attach less importance to work and have lower aspirations towards work, whereas they show more adherence to the managerial norms.

Regarding nationality, Parry and Urwin (2011) and Gallie (2019) highlighted the importance of country and culture when investigating work values. Parry and Urwin (2011) concluded that researchers must presume that a single age group or generation will have different work values according to their nationality and ethnicity. In her literature review, Gallie (2019) concluded that work values and centrality of work for women varied significantly across countries. Steiber (2013, cited in Gallie, 2019) indicated

that women had significantly lower commitment than men in Greece and Portugal, the same commitment in eight OECD countries, and higher commitment in nine other OECD countries (UK, Norway, Finland, Sweden, France, Germany, Poland, Estonia, and Slovenia). Also, Hoorn and Masleand (2013) have shown that unemployment has more impact on well-being in protestant countries, which can suggest that work values and attitudes are different in these countries compared to others.

Regarding professional sectors, Mercure, Vultur, and Fleury (2012) compared work centrality across different occupations in Quebec. Results showed that people who work in the lower scale jobs (manual labour or employee) tend to attach less importance to their work than people in the higher scale jobs (intermediary and superior professions). Also, they compared work centrality across various education levels, which are indirectly tied to different professional sectors, and showed that the people with the lowest (mandatory school) and the highest education level (university) tend to attach less importance to their work than people that have an intermediary education level (post-secondary non university).

Thus, research shows that these sociodemographic variables, in addition to predicting the probability and duration of an unemployment period, can influence the RTW. However, research tends to be inconsistent about the nature of their influence.

3.2 Career shocks

The notion that we will use to conceptualize unemployment is the one of *career shock*. This is a relatively new concept that was first used in 2013 (Seibert, Kraimer, Holtom, & Pierotte, 2013) and first defined in length by Akkermans and colleagues in 2018. The concept is similar to older concepts such as *chance events* (Bright, Pryor, & Harpham, 2005), *serendipity* (Betsworth & Hansen, 1996), and *happenstance* (Miller, 1983). It describes events that are "oftentimes unexpected, meaning either that they cannot

be anticipated and proactively acted upon or, even when anticipated, the effects of the event are not anticipated” (Akkermans et al., 2018, p.2). These events can either be negative, like losing one’s job and becoming unemployed, or losing a close relative, or they can be positive, like an unexpected promotion or receiving an award. Akkermans and Kubasch (2017) have identified virtually no research on such events and have called for more research on career shocks. Given that the concept is relatively new, Akkermans and colleagues (2018) suggests pursuing qualitative research to obtain new insights on this phenomenon. This would allow to better understand contemporary career processes since a substantial part of the population experience such events (Bright et al., 2005) and that these shocks have been shown to substantially alter career paths (Bright et al., 2005; Scott & Hatalla, 1990; Williams, Soeprapto, Like, Touradji, Hess, & Hill, 1998). People can react to these shocks by changing their behavior or their thought process, for example by changing the way the view their relationship to their work. According to Akkermans and colleagues (2018) these reactions may be a determinant factor for their future career’s success.

Akkermans et al. (2018) suggests that career shocks vary along five dimensions: frequency, foreseeability, valence, duration, and source. Some shocks (e.g. being sexually harassed at work) may be more *frequent* than others (e.g. having to change country because of war) and thus have a different impact on one’s career outcome. Some shocks can be more *predictable* than others (e.g. being notified in advanced that one will be fired) and may have a lesser impact on careers. Some shocks can have a *positive valence* (e.g. having twins) even if it can be, in the end, detrimental to one’s career. The *duration* of a shock and its perceived consequences can also vary. For example, it might be possible that a very short and intense shock has a more important impact than a longer but less intense shock. The last dimension is the *source* of the shock, which might be interpersonal (e.g. discrimination or sexual harassment), family-related (e.g. having a child, losing a loved one, being sick), organizational (e.g. closing of a

factory), environmental (e.g. natural disaster), or geopolitical (war). Each career shock can be individually positioned on these five dimensions and will impact career outcomes differently.

Akkermans et al. (2018) suggest that a better understanding the mechanisms underlying the impact of career shocks on career development is crucial. For this reason, and in line with the previous section of this document, our project aims at identifying variations of RTW during unemployment, as well as the mechanisms underlying these variations.

4. Research objectives

Our main research goal is: what characterizes the relationship to work of unemployed people in western Switzerland? To reach our goal, we will focus on three research objectives. The first one is to validate the RTWQ in Switzerland, which will serve for our second objective. To validate it, we will use data that has already been collected in a French-speaking Swiss sample.

The second objective is to measure the RTW of unemployed people to determine if sex, age, nationality, professional sector, unemployment duration, or the fact that unemployment is lived as a career shock can predict RTW. A quantitative method will be used to reach this objective. Since research on the link between sex, age, nationality and RTW is contradictory (see 3.1.4), we will verify these links in the Swiss context. Regarding the links of professional sector (see 3.1.4) and unemployment duration (see 2.4) with the RTW, on which research seems to converge, we will verify the conclusions of the literature in Switzerland. Moreover, verifying if unemployment is lived as a career shock will allow us to expand the knowledge about this recent concept.

The third research objective is to understand the eventual impacts of unemployment on the RTW. A qualitative method will be used to reach this objective. It will first allow us to complement the quantitative data by enabling us to understand if and how RTW varies during unemployment across various groups of unemployed. The qualitative method will then allow us to enlarge our temporal focus and ask our sample how their RTW was before unemployment, how they relate to work in the present, how they perceive that unemployment impacted it, and how they anticipate it in the future.

5. Method

This thesis will use a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design QUAN→qual (Hanson et al., 2005; Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006) and is divided into four phases. In the first phase, the RTWQ will be validated in the Swiss context. In the second phase, quantitative data will be collected and analyzed. In the third phase, qualitative data will be collected and analyzed. To prepare this qualitative phase, the nature of the qualitative sample, as well as the interview protocols will partially be built based on the quantitative results. In the fourth phase, quantitative and qualitative data will be integrated to address our main research objective in a comprehensive manner.

5.1 Validation of the RTWQ in the Swiss context

5.1.1. Participants

The data for a swiss validation has already been collected in two French-speaking Swiss samples. The first sample is composed of 327 students (226 women, 61 men, 40 unknowns, mean age of 21,5 years old). The second sample is composed of 357 workers (220 women, 123 men, 14 unknowns, mean age of 39.4 years old).

5.1.2. Instrument

Data from the RTWQ, which has already been explained in detail (see point 2.1.4) will be analyzed. Based on the MOW literature, Fournier and colleagues (in press) created the RTW multidimensional construct measuring the 7 following dimensions:

- The absolute centrality of work (e.g. «Without work, my life has little interest. »)
- The relative centrality of work (e.g. «Working is central to my life and that's my favorite activity above any other. »)

- The purpose of work. (e.g. «By working, I'm looking to feel financially secure. »)
- The general expectations regarding working life. (e.g. «In my working life in general, it is important for me to have a workload that allows me to maintain a good work life balance. »)
- The obligations and duties of employers and society to workers. (e.g. «The employers have the obligation of assuring to each worker conditions that promote their personal well-being. »)
- The obligations and duties of workers to employers and society. (e.g. «Each worker has a duty to provide quality work. »)
- The representation of decent work. (e.g. «According to me, a decent job is a job that provides job security. »)

The questionnaire consists of 129 items. Each item is to be answered on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not in agreement at all*) to 5 (*absolutely in agreement*). Validated in Quebec (Canada) in French, these dimensions have a Cronbach alpha ranging between 0.8 and 0.93, indicating good psychometric qualities.

5.1.3 Analyses

To validate the structure of the RTWQ within the Swiss context, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) will be conducted on Amos software. The aim is to produce a swiss, shorter version of the RTWQ.

5.2 RTW of unemployed people

5.2.1 Participants

Quantitative data will be collected in a sample of 400 people who have subscribed to an ORP in Lausanne and are, therefore, unemployed. They will be selected by quota, which means that, in cooperation with ORP counselors, specific profiles of participants will be selected based on age,

sex, nationality, professional sector, and unemployment duration so that the size of the subgroups are similar.

5.2.2 Instrument

The instrument for this research question is the RTWQ, which was previously described. It will be sent to the participants via email, using LimeSurvey software.

To measure career shocks, we will have to create a scale based on the existing ones (Seibert et al., 2013; Blokker et al., 2019) composed of just a few items. The goal is to determine to what degree the event that resulted in unemployment is personally felt as unexpected, negative, and to what extent it triggered a thinking process on one's career and future perspectives.

5.2.3 Analyses

We will conduct multiple regressions on SPSS software to determine how our independent variables (age, sex, professional sector...) predict RTW.

Our first hypothesis is that age does not have a significant impact on RTW (Mercure, Vultur, Fleury, 2012). Our second hypothesis is that nationality has an impact on RTW because of the difference of culture (Parry & Urwin, 2011; Gallie, 2019). Our third hypothesis is that sex does not have a significant impact on RTW because differences in work values between men and women tend to decrease (Gallie, 2019). Based on the study by Mercure Vultur, and Fleury (2012), the fourth hypothesis is that professional sector will have an impact on RTW. Our fifth hypothesis is that unemployment duration will not have an impact on RTW, as suggested in the literature (Isaksson, Johansson, Bellaagh, & Sjöberg, 2004; Saunders, Nedelec, & McEachen, 2018). Our last hypothesis is that when unemployment is considered as a career shock, unemployment affects the RTW because, by definition, a career shock triggers a thinking process on one's career.

5.3 Impact of unemployment on RTW

5.3.1 Participants

During the quantitative phase, participants will be asked if they would agree to meet us. Those who will have agreed will be contacted again, via email, to book a one-hour interview at a location of their choosing. The objective is to be able to interview at least twenty of them.

5.3.2 Instrument

During the first phase, the qualitative data will be collected in the form of semi-structured interviews, which is a suited technique to study complex and little studied phenomenon in human sciences (Anadón, 2006). The objective is, after having reminded the participants what RTW is, to ask them questions on:

- Their past RTW. An example could be: "What were your general expectations regarding working life when you worked?"
- Their current RTW. An example of question could be: "If you had to make a priority list of your different life domains (family, friends, hobbies, work...), what would the list look like?"
- The impact that unemployment had on their RTW. An example of question could be: "To what extent did unemployment change your RTW?"
- Their future RTW. An example could be: "What purposes do you want your work to have in the future?"

5.3.3 Analyses

In a first step, the method of thematic analysis will allow us to identify the main themes concerning the evolution or stability of the RTW dimensions and find patterns within our data.

The second step will aim at combining the quantitative and the qualitative data according to the mixed sequential quan-QUAL design, which will allow us to draw conclusions based on the entirety of our data. Particularly, we will carry out cluster analyses combining the scores of the 7 dimensions of the RTWQ and the qualitative categorizations. This will allow us to identify complex typologies of RTW among unemployed people.

6. Contribution of this thesis

Beyond the scientific contributions, this research might also lead to practical contributions. The questions that are central here are: is the base (RTW) on which counselors and clients build a project on during a counseling process as stable as it might appear? To what extent does it change over time? In what situations, and for what clients a possible change of RTW is to be considered? Scientifically speaking, this will allow to have a better understanding of the psychosocial impact of unemployment, and of the evolution of MOW. And for the practice, this will allow counselors to have more insights to understand clients' situations and, thus, work more efficiently with them.

Indeed, career counselors often must accompany unemployed individuals in their career development process. A key factor in the elaboration of a new career project is the relationship that these individuals have with their work. For example, if work is central to someone's life, the counseling process should focus deeply on what the individual wants to accomplish through it and the choice of a new training or career will be studied accordingly. On the opposite, if someone just needs to find a job as soon as possible and do not really care about the nature of the work, the counselor will focus more on job search techniques. For that reason, in a counseling context, a deeper understanding of the RTW of unemployed people can be useful to counselors.

7. Execution agenda

Table 4
Execution agenda

Communication	Publication	Analyses	Data collection	Literature review	Thesis draft and paper 1	Sept-oct 18			
						Nov-Dec 18			
						Jan-Feb 19			
						Mar-Apr 19			
						May-Jun 19			
						July-Aug 19	RTWQ Valid.	Quanti.	
						Sept-Oct 19	Paper 1 RTWQ		
						Nov-Dec 19	Colloque du sens	Quanti.	
						Jan-Feb 20			
						Mar-Apr 20	Paper 2 Quanti.		Paper 2
						May-Jun 20			
						July-Aug 20	ICP		Qualli.
						Sept-Oct 20			
						Nov-Dec 20		Qualli.	
						Jan-Feb 21	Paper 3 Qualli.		Paper 3
						Mar-Apr 21			
						May-Jun 21			
						July-Aug 21			
						Sept-Oct 21	IAEVG	Quant-quali Integration	
						Nov-Dec 21			
						Jan-Feb 22	Paper 4 Quanti-quali integration		Paper 4
						Mar-Apr 22			
						May-Jun 22			
						July-Aug 22	AIPTLF		
						Sept-Oct 22			Thesis manuscript
Nov-Dec 22									
Jan-Feb 23	Thesis manuscript								
Mar-Apr 23									
May-Jun 23	Colloquium								
July-Aug 23	Defence								

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