Career Guidance and Counseling and Migration Challenges: Voices from GERMANY

by Ute-Chr. Klehe & Katja Wehrle (Justus-Liebig-University Giessen)

Data Overview
Qualitative studies

▸ **Study designs and data analyses:**

  ▸ Semi-structured interviews

  ▸ Interpretative qualitative approach (Merriam, 2009; Sandberg, 2005)

  ▸ Thematic analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022)

  ▸ NVIVO11, Atlas.ti9

Study 1: Identity	Study 2: Career adaptation	Study 3: Self-regulation	Study 4: Meaningfulness-making	Study 5: Employers' eroding trust
N = 31 refugees	*N* = 36 refugees	*N* = 38 refugees, 27 refugee support workers, 37 employers	*N* = 24 refugees (2 time points with 1 year between the interviews)	*N* = 27 refugee support workers, 37 employers
▸ From Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Kosovo, and Ghana	▸ From Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Kosovo, Georgia, and Iran	▸ From 11 countries (18 from Syria)	▸ From Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Libya, and Kosovo	▸ *Employers:* Businesses and public-sector employers of different sizes and industries, located in rural and urban settings in former East and West Germany
▸ Residence in GER: ~ 3 years	▸ Residence in GER: ~ 3 years and 7 months	▸ Residence in GER: ~ 4 years and 1 month	▸ Residence in GER at T2: ~ 3 years	
▸ Work permit: ~ 2 years	▸ Work permit: ~ 3 years	▸ Work permit: ~ 2 years and 3 months	▸ Work permit at T2: ~ 2 years and 9 months	

Setting and Stakeholders

in Germany

Germany as a (Forced) Migration Context

▶ One of the primary receiving countries for refugees

  ▶ Middle of 2021: Almost 1.24 million refugees and 233.000 asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2022)

▶ **German labor market:**

  ▶ Highly formalized and bureaucratic institutional context

  ▶ High vocational specificity and principles for education and academization (Baethge & Wolter, 2015; Hillmert, 2006)

  ▶ German as a working language

  ▶ **Prerequisites for employees**

    ▶ Good knowledge of the German language

    ▶ Formal credentials and qualifications

    ▶ *Difficult, as both are often lacking for refugees*

Stakeholder Ecosystem of Refugees' Integration

▶ **Stakeholders in the Cross-Sector Context of Refugees' Integration**

- ▶ Refugees
- ▶ Local employers
- ▶ Local employees/coworkers
- ▶ Official/unofficial supporters:
  - ▶ *Official:* Support agencies
  - ▶ *Unofficial:* Volunteers
- ▶ Authorities:
  - ▶ Employment Agencies
  - ▶ The Federal/State Legislation and Government

Main Immigration Issues Faced

in Germany

Main Immigration Issues
for Refugees' Job Search

▶ **Context with foreign demands, power structures, and professional scripts** (Barley & Tolbert, 1997)

    ▶ Formative for refugees' self-regulation & locals' interpretation of their behaviors

        ▶ Behavior that was appropriate at home may now seem "off the mark"

    ▶ Impact on the integration of and support for refugees (Wagner & Heatherton, 2015)

▶ **Overarching barriers:**

    ▶ **Fundamental uncertainties** (e.g., residency)

    ▶ **Feeling of having lost or losing time**

    ▶ **Social isolation**

    ▶ **Lacking personal resources** (e.g., knowledge of the local language)

▶ **Refugees often with few / depleted resources**

Main Immigration Issues
for Refugees' Identities

▶ **Threats to entering**
  ▶ Legislation and local vocational/residency regulations
  ▶ Lacking evidence of formal qualifications
  ▶ Lack of credential recognition
  ▶ Unemployment or occupational downgrading

▶ **Threats to staying**
  ▶ Insecure future

▶ **Threats to belonging**
  ▶ Social loneliness and lacking social affiliation
  ▶ Social segregation and language barriers
  ▶ Impacts on non-work-related identities (e.g., family provider)

▶ **Imposition of unwanted and threatening identities**
  ▶ General stigma of being a refugee / foreigner
  ▶ If they do not work: 'Benefit scrounger'
  ▶ If they do work: 'Cheap workforce' and professional interchangeability

8

Possible Consequences
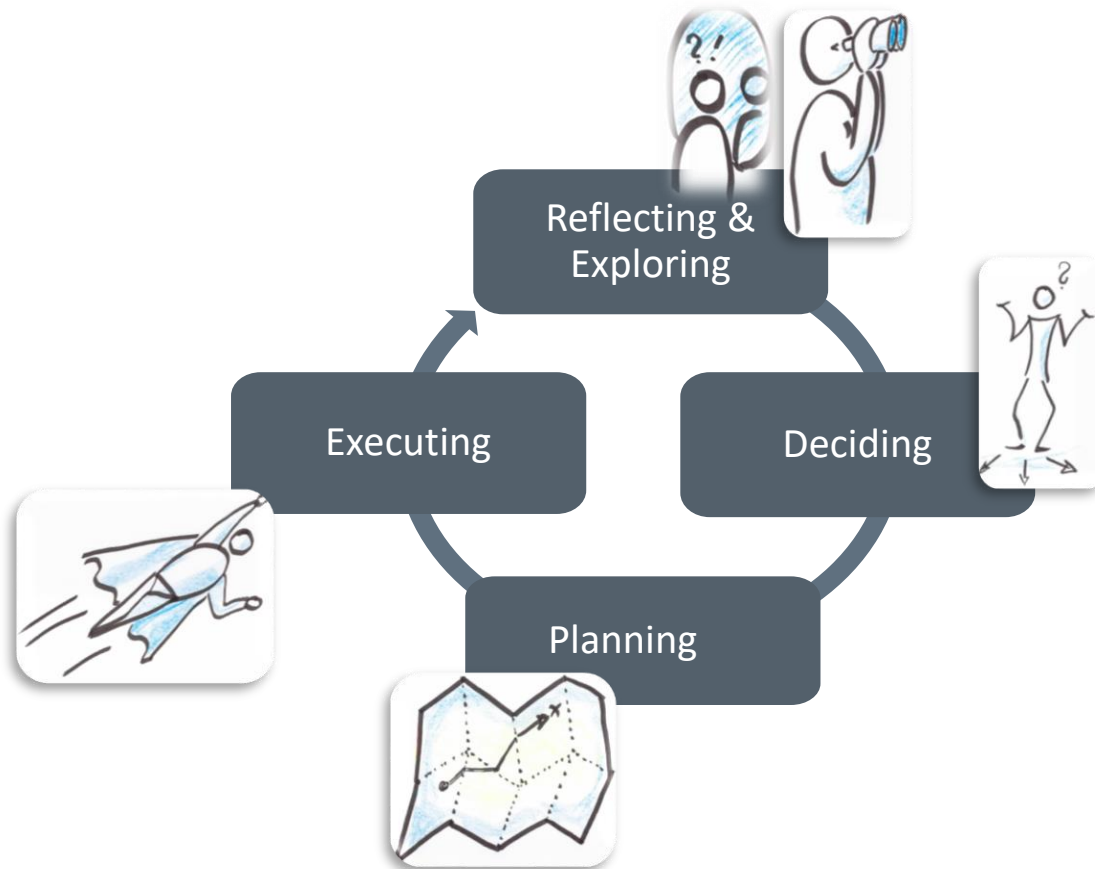Identity Threats

Identity Threats

Incongruence between existential assumptions people have about themselves and their reality
–
Potential damage to the value, meaning, or enactment of an identity
(Petriglieri, 2011)

▸ **Adversity does not necessarily stop after arriving in the receiving country**
  ▸ Fundamentally threatened identities and lost connections to the self and to others

▸ **Threatened identities:**
  ▸ Invalidation of existing identities

▸ **Threatening identities:**
  ▸ Imposition of negative identities (e.g., stigma)

▸ **Threats to identity needs** (Eilam & Shamir, 2005; Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016)
  ▸ Self-worth
  ▸ Self-distinctiveness
  ▸ Self-continuity
  ▸ Self-control
  ▸ Social belongingness

Possible Consequences
Self-Regulation Difficulties

Reflecting & Exploring

Executing

Deciding

Planning

Underregulation

Misregulation

Overregulation

No possibility for regulation

Career Guidance and Counseling

Suggestions based on present research

Suggestions for Career Guidance and Counseling
Proactive Identity-Threat Prevention & Reactive Identity Threat Coping

▸ **Proactive Identity Threat Prevention: Resourcing** (Feldman & Worline, 2012)

  ▸ Turning mundane assets or objects into resources

  - Identify and proactively create opportunities
  - Turn chance encounters into social resources
  - Circumvent barriers hindering integration

▸ **Reactive Identity Threat Coping** (Petriglieri, 2011)

  ▸ Identity protection (e.g., highlighting positive distinctiveness or derogating threat source)

  ▸ Identity restructuring (e.g., changing the importance or the meaning of an identity, or exiting an identity altogether)

  ▸ Combination of identity protection and restructuring (Kira & Klehe, 2016)

  ▸ Identity threat jujitsu (Kreiner & Sheep, 2009): Transform negative threats into positive movement to (1) protect one's threatened identity and (2) build improved relationships between oneself and one's environment

  - Reframing threat as an opportunity
  - Seeking to build improved relationships to people posing threats

12

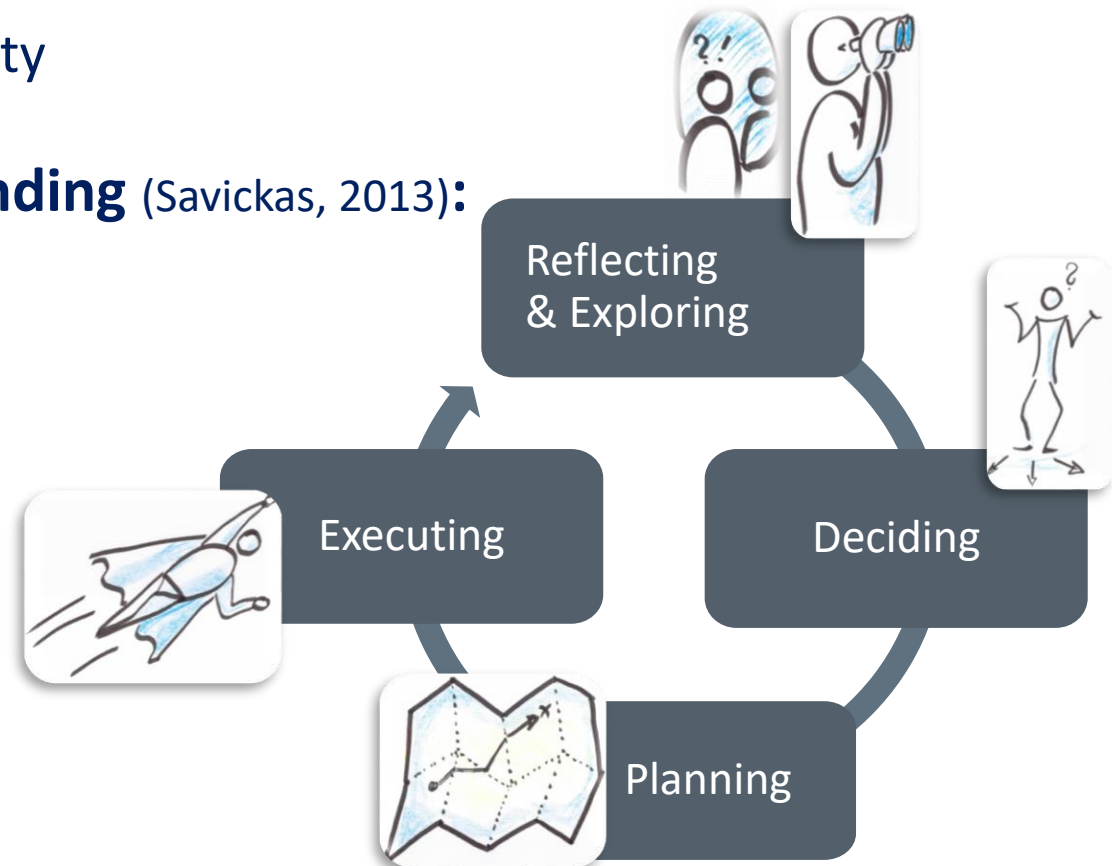# Suggestions for Career Guidance and Counseling
Career Adaptation (I / III)

▶ **For regular job seekers:**
  ▶ Job search → Work status, not quality

▶ **Relevance of career adaptive responding** (Savickas, 2013)**:**
  ▶ Curiosity: Exploring
  ▶ Control: Deciding
  ▶ Concern: Planning
  ▶ Confidence: Executing
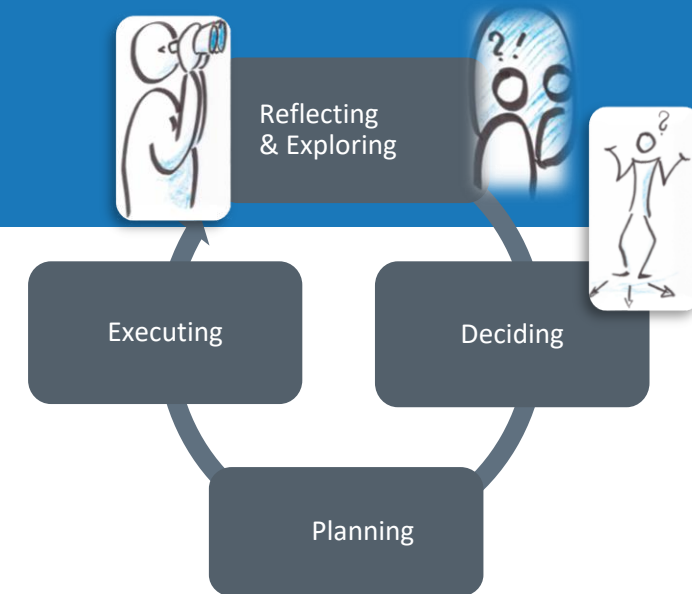
Suggestions for Career Guidance and Counseling
Career Adaptation (II / III)

Exploring the self and the environment

▸ **Knowing what to explore**

   ▸ Holding on to former career

   ▸ Formulating new career dreams

   ▸ Revising old career dream

▸ **Finding and establishing ways to explore**

▸ **What helps:** Rich educational and work opportunities & being offered a chance

Taking control and making decisions

▸ **Continuously moving on** (disregarding uncertainties, taking responsibility)

▸ **Consciously prioritizing helpful emotions and thoughts** (controlling one's emotions, appreciating)

▸ **Contributing** (being recognized, giving back)
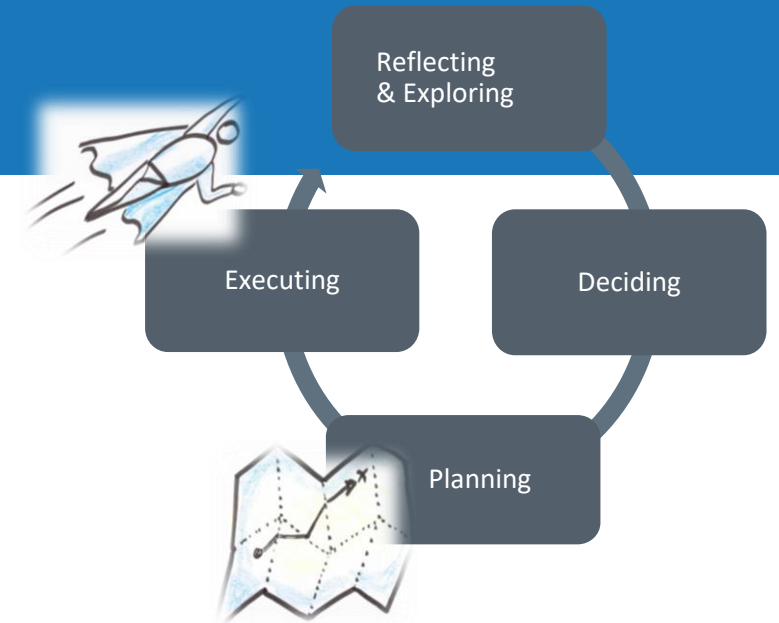
▸ **What helps:** Sense of security & social connections

Reflecting & Exploring

Executing

Deciding

Planning

Take-Home Message

Take-Home Message
Ways to Support a Successful Transition of Refugees to the Receiving Country

▶ **Help people mitigate identity threats by, e.g., identifying their key identity needs and adapting the procedures to meet these**

▶ **Assist the development of strategies to …**

   ▶ … self-regulate and cope adaptively

      ▶ *Helpful:* Active coping with identity threats, 'can do' and optimistic attitudes, identity protection, and creating social systems & networks

      ▶ *Potentially harmful:* Concealing one's identity, reducing the importance of former identity, or exiting it

   ▶ … create low-threshold opportunities for social contact and resources, as well as form high quality workplace relationships

   ▶ … regulate one's emotions

   ▶ … develop growth-oriented sensemaking

▶ **Help people develop goals they can identify with, that are consistent with their identities**

   ▶ Guide reorientation processes and help people in finding meaningful (re-)employment

   ▶ Establish links between past vocational identities and local career opportunities

▶ **Positive consequences**

   ▶ Overcoming adversity holds opportunities for psychological growth

   ▶ Experiencing meaningfulness

Questions & Answers

Thank you for your attention!

Ute-Christine Klehe & Katja Wehrle

Department of Work and Organizational Psychology

Justus-Liebig-University Giessen

Ute-Christine.Klehe@psychol.uni-giessen.de

Katja.Wehrle@psychol.uni-giessen.de

References (I / III)

Published studies of this presentation:

Wehrle, K., Kira, M., & Klehe, U.-C. (2019). Putting career construction into context: Career adaptability among refugees. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 111*, 107–124. **https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2018.08.007**

Wehrle, K., Klehe, U.-C., Kira, M., & Zikic. J. (2018). Can I come as I am? Refugees' vocational identity threats, coping, and growth. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 105*, 83–101. **https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2017.10.010**

Further references:

Ashforth, B. E., & Schinoff, B. S. (2016). Identity under construction: How individuals come to define themselves in organizations. *The Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, *3*(1), 111–137. **https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-041015-062322**

Baethge, M., & Wolter, A. (2015). The German skill formation model in transition: From dual system of VET to higher education? *Journal for Labour Market Research*, *48*(2), 97–112. **https://doi.org/10.1007/s12651-015-0181-x**

Barley, S.R., & Tolbert, P. S. (1997). Institutionalization and structuration: Studying the links between action and institution. *Organization Studies*, *18*(1), 93–117. **https://doi.org/10.1177/017084069701800106**

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. **https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa**

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). Conceptual and design thinking for thematic analysis. *Qualitative Psychology, 9*(1), 3–26. **https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000196**

References (II / III)

Eilam, G., & Shamir, B. (2005). Organizational change and self-concept threats: A theoretical perspective and a case study. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *41*(4), 399–421. **https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886305280865**

Feldman, M. S., & Worline, M. (2012). Resources, resourcing, and ampliative cycles in organizations. In K. Cameron & G. Spreitzer (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of positive organizational scholarship* (pp. 629-641). Oxford University Press.

Hillmert, S. (2006). *Skill formation in Britain and Germany: Recent developments in the context of traditional differences, 1–23*. CES Germany & Europe Working Papers, No. 06.1, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. **http://aei.pitt.edu/63724/1/PSGE_06_1.pdf**

Kira, M., & Klehe, U.-C. (2016). Self-definition threats and potential for growth among mature-aged job-loss victims. *Human Resource Management Review*, *26*(3), 242–259. **https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2016.03.001**

Kreiner, G. E., & Sheep, M. (2009). Growing pains and gains: Framing identity dynamics as opportunities for identity growth. In L. Morgan Roberts & J. E. Dutton (Eds.), *Exploring positive identities and organizations: Building a theoretical and research foundation* (pp. 23–46). Psychology Press.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation.* Jossey-Bass.

Petriglieri, J. L. (2011). Under threat: Responses to and the consequences of threats to individuals' identities. *Academy of Management Review*, *36*(4), 641–662. **https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2009.0087**

Sandberg, J. (2005). How do we justify knowledge produced within interpretive approaches? *Organizational Research Methods*, *8*(1), 41–68. **https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428104272000**

Savickas, M. L. (2013). Career construction theory and practice. In S. D. Brown & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Career development and counseling: Putting theory and research to work* (2nd ed.; pp. 147–183). John Wiley & Sons.

References (III / III)

UNHCR (2022). *Germany.* **https://www.unhcr.org/germany.html**

Wagner, D. D., & Heatherton, T. F. (2015). Self-regulation and its failure: The seven deadly threats to self-regulation. In M. Mikulincer & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *APA handbook of personality and social psychology, Volume 1: Attitudes and social cognition* (pp. 805–842). American Psychological Association.