

Abstract

Clearly the world of work is changing. Evidence from technology, artificial intelligence, globalization, neoliberalism and other developments suggest that work and careers as known in industrialized countries are not the same as they have been since the industrial revolution. Changes include shifts from manufacturing to service, with an emphasis on soft skills, from time-based to task-based work (the gig economy), and a reduced need for human interaction. A profoundly different and less linear employment trajectory is emerging for many people. In this context, young people's prosperity may be threatened, particularly youth who are disadvantaged or racialized within various countries or contexts. Despite accumulating skills and making efforts to find work, many young people are struggling.

The question that this symposium addresses is how young people themselves make sense of and construct their lives and their future work lives in describing and acting in the context of these changes and in their specific contexts and countries.

The first presenter and colleagues address the how Finnish adolescents monitor, pursue, and renegotiate career goals as they make the transition from secondary school, using a repeated measures design. Presenter 2 and colleague examine the adjustment of international students in the United States as they adapt to the rapidly changing sociocultural and economic contexts from the perspective of post-migration growth. They suggest that for certain populations and under specific conditions the adapting to this new work environment, as least as it is anticipated, can be successful. Presenter 3 describes the construction of alternative futures among disadvantaged young people in Brazil. This study documents the emergence of alternative futures through dialogical negotiations between self and others. Finally, in the fourth presentation, an alternative conceptualization and research method are illustrated based on goal-directed action that links job prospects with current joint goal-directed behaviour.