

# Career success in the context of temporary agency work

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# Temporary Agency Work (TAW) differs basically from standard work

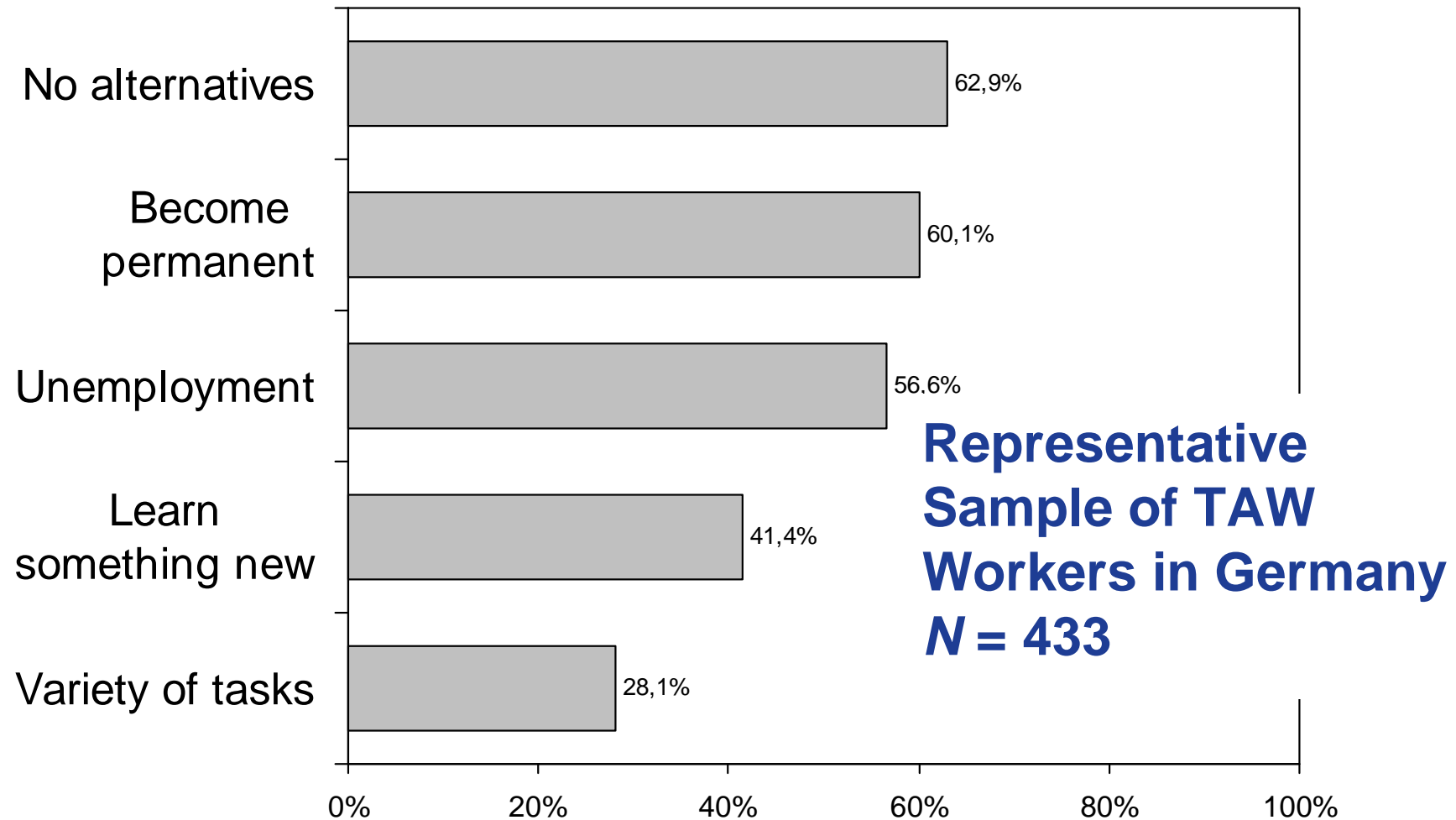
- **Triangular Relationship:** Temps are employed by a staffing agency and they are assigned to different client organizations.
- **Temps are less privileged than permanent workers:**
  - lower compensation (Kalleberg, Reskin, & Hudson, 2000),
  - less training (Finegold et al. (2005), Galais et al. (2007); Kalleberg, Reskin, & Hudson, 2000)
  - higher job-insecurity (DeWitte et al. 2003).
  - low complexity and little autonomy of jobs (Kalleberg & Rognes, 2000).
- **High degree of instability and transition** (Druker & Stanworth, 2004). High fluctuation in TAW: Most workers are employed for less than a year (Jahn & Antoni, 2006, TK report, 2009).



# Standard indicators of career success are not suitable

- Promotion, career advancement, and wage increase do not apply to the context of TAW.
- The majority of temps are looking for a permanent job (in the client organization) and they regard TAW as a transitional period (Storrie, 2002; Von Hippel, Mangum, Greenberger, Heneman, & Skoglund, 1997; CIETT 2000).
- Most temps are pushed into TAW because they have no alternatives (involuntary temps) (Storrie, 2002; Von Hippel, Mangum, Greenberger, Heneman, & Skoglund, 1997; CIETT, 2000).
- About 50% of temporary agency workers were unemployed before they began with TAW in Germany (CIETT, 2000; Storrie, 2002; TK Report, 2009; BA, 2008).

# Motives for Temporary Agency Work



# The stepping stone function of TAW

- TAW is considered to having a stepping stone function from unemployment to permanent work.  
(e.g. Antoni & Jahn, 2006; Korpi & Levin, 2000; Kvasnicka, 2005; Storrie, 2002, TK report, 2009).
- But it is not clear for whom this may be the case.
- Are individual differences relevant for the transition into a permanent job in the client organization?
- What consequences does it have for workers' well-being if transition into a permanent job fails?



## Individual characteristics that might count in the context of TAW

- TAW is highly demanding with regard to individuals' adaptability.
- Temporary agency workers have to master changing organizational environments.
- With every new assignment workers are confronted with new colleagues and supervisors in the client organization and organizational culture → **social adaptation**.
- Temporary workers have to master different tasks and have to learn the ropes quickly while job-person-fit may be limited → **task-related adaptation**.



# Variables

## Social adaptation

Self-Monitoring

- Social skills
- Inconsistency (Nowack and Kammer, 1987)

## Task mastery

Human capital  
(education, job experience)

## Career success

- Transition into Permanent Employment
- health-outcomes (Mohr, 1986)

# Self-monitoring: the art of adaptation

- How people influence the impression that others have of them.  
(Day, Schleicher, Unckless, & Hiller, 2002; Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 2001).
- In situations with high social pressure and changing situational settings, the sensitivity to social demands, and the ability to control and monitor one's behavior may be useful for successful adaptation in organizational settings (Schleicher & Day, 2006).
- Previous research has shown that high self-monitors are more successful in the context of standard work
  - easily manage boundary roles (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1982)
  - show higher career mobility
  - experience a higher probability of internal promotion (Kilduff & Day, 1994).
- Focus of Self-Monitoring:
  - individual's ability to match the expectation of the situation → **chameleon like** (Kilduff & Day, 1994).
  - ability to influence social situations for one's own ends → **social versatility** (Turnley & Bolino, 2001).





## Method *Sample and Procedure*

### Time 1

At the beginning of  
Temporary Agency Work

$N = 151$

### Time 2

five months later

$n = 110$

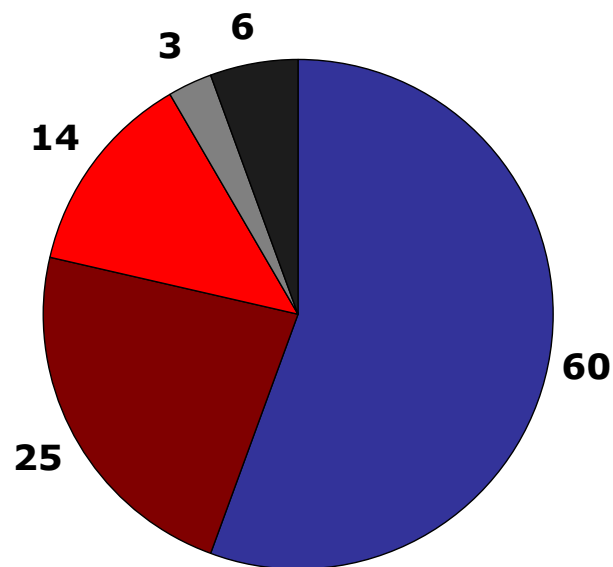
### Time 3

15 months later

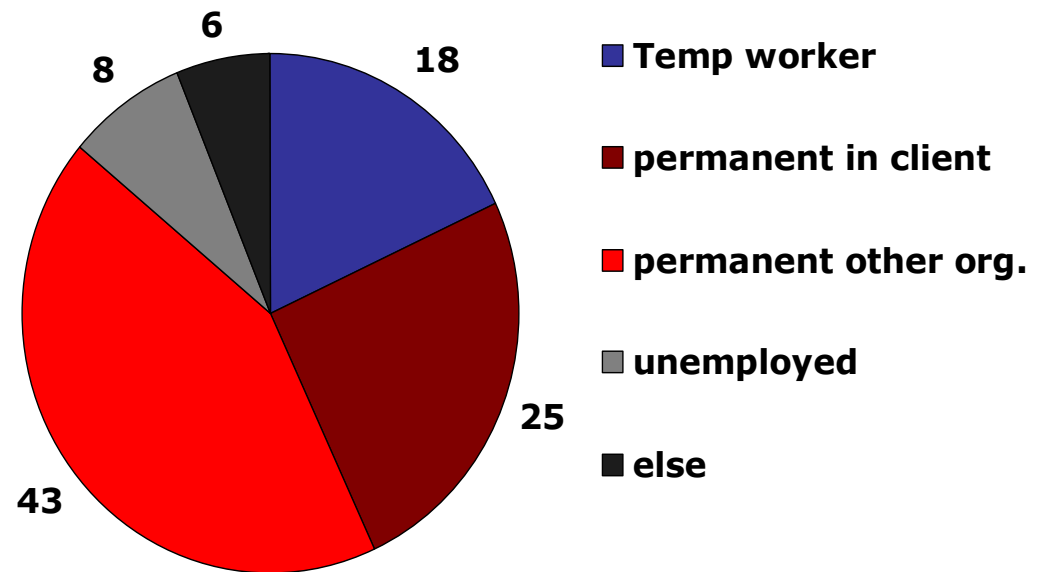
$n = 101$

Clerical workers  
(83% women, Age = 30.71 )

## Work Status at Time 2 and Time 3: Stepping stone potential



5 months later



15 months later

# **Who can use TAW as a stepping stone? Individual differences.**



## Social skills and inconsistency on transition into a permanent job (logistic regression)

(t1)	<i>b</i>	
	Employment status T2	
	TAW vs. Permanent Job (all)	TAW vs. Job in Client Organization
Time in TAW	.12	.16
Sex	-.51	-.53
Age	.04	.04
Education	.13	-.00
Experience assignment task	.16	-.02
Frequency agency	-.07	-.07
Preference for permanent job	.29	.06
Stepping stone motive	-.10	-.05
<i>Self-Monitoring</i>		
Social skills	1.74	2.63*
Inconsistency	-1.74	-3.19
Constant	-2.73	1.48

Note: <sup>+</sup>p < .10, \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001.



## Commitment and transition into a permanent job in the client organization

	<i>b</i>
Permanent Job in client organization (T2)	
Weeks pursuing TAW at T1	.21
Sex <sup>a</sup>	.76
Age	.02
Education <sup>b</sup>	-.81
Vocational training	-1.77
Experience with assignment task	-.17
Number of assignments	-.24
Involuntary motives	-.33
Voluntary motives	-.29
Job-satisfaction	-.56
Commitment to the Client	2.63*
Dual Commitment	-.58
constant	-.1.15

Note: <sup>+</sup> $p < .10$ , <sup>\*</sup> $p < .05$ , <sup>\*\*</sup> $p < .01$ , <sup>\*\*\*</sup> $p < .001$ .  $n^x = 79$ ,  $n^y = 92$ . <sup>a</sup>(1 = male, 2 = female), <sup>b</sup>(1 = no qualification to 5 = masters, <sup>c</sup>(1 = not at all to 5 = very much).



# Individual determinants of the stepping stone effect

- TAW can be seen as a stepping stone for those with high social skills who become integrated into the work-group.
- Initial motives for TAW had no effects on transition into a permanent job in the client organization.
- Commitment to the client, which includes the wish to become a perm, is positively related to transition success.

# **Transition failure and individual well-being**



# Employment status and health

	Psychosomatic Complaints T2 <sup>x</sup>					Psychosomatic Complaints T3 <sup>y</sup>				
	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>adj.</sub>	$\Delta R^2$	F <sub>change</sub>	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>adj.</sub>	$\Delta R^2$	F <sub>change</sub>
Step 1: Control variables										
Psychosomatic Complaints T1	.64***	.52	.45	.52	7.79***	.45***	.28	.17	.28	2.47*
Current Employment status <sup>a</sup>	.04					.01				
Time in TAW	.00					.08				
Frequency Agency	-.11					-.04				
Full-/Part-time employment <sup>b</sup>	-.00					.24*				
Age <sup>c</sup>	-.06					.05				
Gender <sup>d</sup>	.03					-.08				
Education <sup>e</sup>	-.16 <sup>+</sup>					.06				
TAW is a makeshift solution <sup>f</sup>	.09					-.10				
Preference for job change <sup>f</sup>	-.08					.19				
Step 2:										
Reassignment T2 <sup>g</sup>	-.48	.52	.45	.00	.33	-1.08*	.29	.17	.01	.94
Step 3:										
Commitment to Client Organization <sup>f</sup>	-.30	.52	.44	.00	.05	-.53	.34	.21	.05	4.13*
Step 4:										
Commitment to Client x Reassignment T2	.56	.53	.44	.01	1.64	1.32*	.40	.27	.06	5.82*





## Those who wanted, but did not achieve transition into a permanent job in the client organization – effects on well-being



# Commitment is a prerequisite for transition success but it makes vulnerable

- High organizational commitment, which includes the motive to become a perm in the client organization, has positive effects on transition success.
- But high commitment is related to an increase of psychosomatic complaints when transition fails.
- Unmet career expectations are detrimental for health outcomes.



# Summery and Conclusion

- Social integration into the client organization is crucial for finding a permanent job in a client organization.
- Human capital seems to be less relevant in the context of TAW.
- Individual differences with regard to adaptation strategies may play a key role in the context of transitory careers.

