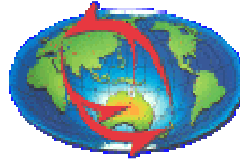


Adaptation of German Migrants to New Zealand: Major Challenges & Transcendent Inner Sense of Self



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Vital Task: Understanding Challenges & Resilience Factors

While migration has always been an integral part of human life, globalisation increasingly compressing time and space has several consequences for migration and migrants. Although globalisation facilitates cultural interconnectedness and has the potential to enhance personal fulfilment and opportunities (Inda & Rosaldo, 2002), the new migration features might increase adaptation issues leading to a proliferation of distress and mental health problems (Marsella & Pederson, 2004; Eytan, 2004). An increase in adaptation issues affects not only migrants, it will also translate into a substantial social and economic demands on the host countries (Bhugra & Mastrogianni, 2004). For the latter, ensuring that immigrants stay and are supported in ways that contribute to development of social and economic capital is crucial. To enhance well-being/health & the likelihood of staying, it is necessary to understand:

- the challenges migrants face throughout their migration process &
- which factors make migrants more resilient and enable them to adapt

Research Design: Unique & Innovative

To arrive at a deeper, richer, rigorous and multi-perspective picture (bricolage) which better captures the complexity of the migration process, we selected and synergized various theoretical paradigms, methodologies & methods:

- resilience/salutogenic paradigm, symbolic interactionism, & social constructionism in narrative theory
- grounded theory, ethnography, & retrospective approach
- participant observation, episodic interviews, and review of documents.

This design facilitated free and in-depth disclosure of migrants' thoughts, feelings, behaviour, and allowed them to express sensitive issues.

Participants: Contrasting Extreme & Diverse Cases

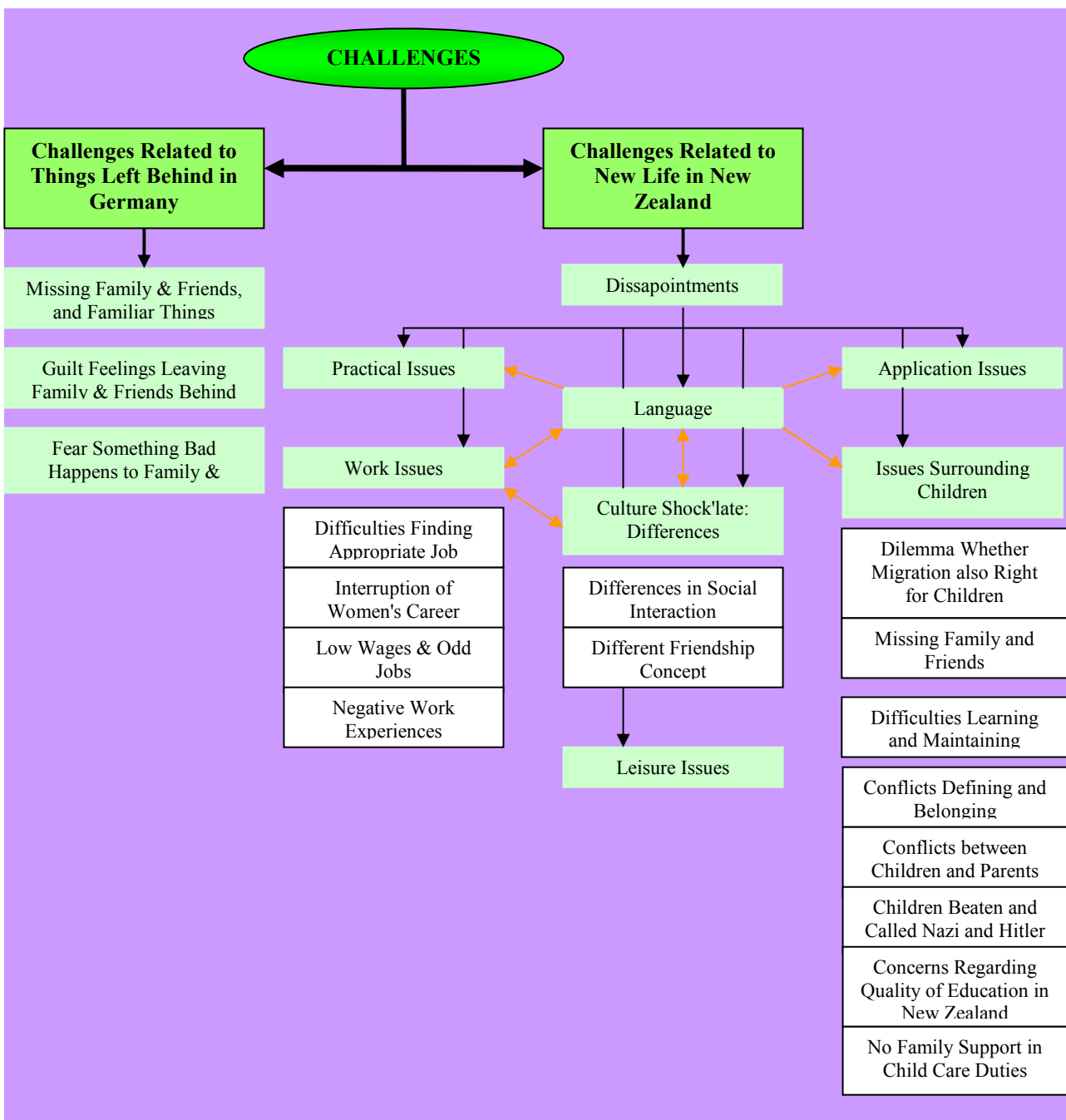
- four German immigrant couples who live in New Zealand (stayers)
- four couples who had migrated to New Zealand, but returned to Germany (returners)
- highly diverse personal and migration backgrounds

We sampled extreme cases, because we assumed that the stayers had adapted well to their new environment and the returners had not. Contrasting these two extremes provided data that

contributed richer insights into the dynamic migration process. This process is described in the next section.

Self/identity – Adaptation Link: Spiral Process

- 1) Specific conditions during upbringing laid foundations for:
 - development of migration dream
 - evolvment of self/identity conducive for migrating
 - desire to travel
- 2) Subsequent travelling first within Germany & later throughout Europe and the world prepared for migration challenges through further evolving the self/identity.
- 3) Migrating presented many substantial challenges simultaneously making stress an inevitable aspect of the migration process (see Graphic 1):



- 4) Whether challenges were experienced, whether distress developed, and the degree of distress, adaptation & the likelihood of staying was influenced by the degree of evolverment towards an inner sense of self and an identity that transcends national boundaries when migrating.
- 5) Experiencing & dealing with challenges provided opportunities for gaining new experiences which
 - increased knowledge & understanding of their selves and the world,
 - changed their self
 - unfolded the potential of their selvesirrespective of the level of distress or whether participants stayed or returned.
- 6) These processes facilitated the further evolverment of a transcendent inner sense of self/identity - a higher state of consciousness/awareness, adding another layer to their evolverment spiral (see Figure 1).

Useful Resources: Coherent Migration Stories

The evolverment of transcendent inner sense of self/identity could be facilitated by:

- 1) Books that transmit coherent migration stories with useful beliefs, attitudes, and strategies to enable German migrants to:
 - make better sense of migration
 - construct coherent stories that facilitate growth and health/well-being
- 2) Counselling service that aims at assisting migrants to construct coherent stories.

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